UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/423
22 September 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Item 12 of the provisional agenda*

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Review and assessment of efforts to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Review and assessment of efforts to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities" (JIU/REP/94/6).

* A/49/150.

94-37139 (E) 131094 201094

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ANNEX

JIU/REP/94/6

REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF EFFORTS TO RESTRUCTURE THE REGIONAL DIMENSION OF UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

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ACRONYMS

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ACC	Administrative Committee on Co-ordination
ADB	Asia Development Bank
APCTT	Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum
CCAQ	Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions
CCPOQ	Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions
CGPRT Centre	Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Timber Crops in Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific
CHR	Centre for Human Rights
CELADE	Demographic Centre for Latin America
CPC	Committee for Programme and Co-ordination
CST	Country Support Team
DDSMS	Department for Development Support and Management Services
DESD	Department for Economic and Social Development
DESIPA	Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DIESA	Department of International Economic and Social Affairs
DPCSD	Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
IDEP	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
ILPES	Latin America and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning
IPF	Indicative Planning Figure
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-NADAF	United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s
RNAM	Regional Network for Agricultural Machinery
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation
SIAP	Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report reviews the past and current efforts to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities. It explains the difficulties encountered and reasons why past efforts did not achieve the results that had been sought.

The report also examines the current restructuring exercise which has enjoyed two key advantages in comparison with the previous attempts: a much less confrontational climate in the Organization's governing bodies, and the leadership role of the Secretary-General whose deep commitment to restructuring is commendable.

However, after a "bold beginning" in 1992, restructuring in the economic and social sectors lost its momentum and was only partially implemented as far as decentralization to the regional commissions is concerned. This may be attributed to a number of reasons, including:

(a) the declining interest on the part of some Member States for restructuring of the economic and social sectors and more particularly, as observed by some high officials of the Secretariat, "a limited support in central intergovernmental bodies for major initiatives for decentralization";

(b) unfinished process of reform and revitalization of the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors of the Organization;

(c) absence, prior to the current restructuring exercise, of an extensive and substantive analysis as to complementarity of functions of and future co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms for the various entities of the United Nations both at and away from Headquarters;

(d) lack of intergovernmental dialogue, especially in the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, on restructuring and decentralization issues;

(e) lack of forward-looking analytical and thought-provoking reports as well as documents on the programmatic impact and financial implications of the organizational changes made in the course of the current restructuring process, submitted to Member States by the Secretariat, which partially explains the insufficiency of intergovernmental dialogue and guidance given to the Secretary-General by Member States with regard to restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Secretariat; and

(f) that there is no official specifically responsible, on a day-to-day basis, for all aspects of restructuring, including decentralization.

Underlying many of these problems there is another general issue: the lack of a clearly defined strategic analysis and strategic planning responsibility which an organization such as the United Nations should have to be able to respond promptly and effectively to the new challenges with which it is being confronted.

In order to give a further impetus to restructuring of the economic and social sectors in general, and decentralization to the regional level, in particular, the Inspector suggests that:

(a) Member States may wish to reaffirm their conviction of the urgent need for both processes, and take more co-ordinated positions in the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations on such issues as roles and programmes of the respective economic and social bodies;

(b) Member States may wish to give the Secretary-General more specific guidance for the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Secretariat;

(c) Member States may wish to give careful consideration to establishing a strategic analysis and strategic planning facility in the United Nations Secretariat;

(d) the Secretary-General should designate a competent senior official with extensive managerial experience, who would be responsible for firm implementation of the General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions as well as his plans pertaining to restructuring;

(e) the Secretary-General should prepare a report on delineation of functions of and co-ordination and co-operation between the various United Nations economic and social entities, which should also contain his ideas on further restructuring;

(f) the regional commissions should strive to excel in areas where they enjoy distinct comparative advantages vis-a-vis other United Nations entities as well as other governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the economic and social fields in their respective regions; and

(g) Member States may wish, through their representatives in the legislative bodies of the United Nations system, to support the recent efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the co-ordinating and team leadership role of the regional commissions.

As the Inspector was completing his report in May 1994, United Nations officials informed the JIU that the Secretariat was also concerned with the slow pace of progress and intended to take some corrective measures in the subsequent months.

INTRODUCTION

1. Changing realities and needs of Member States in their respective regions make it both necessary and possible to take inventory and to make an assessment of the experience in implementing the relevant provisions of the "restructuring resolution",[1] as well as of many subsequent resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and other legislative bodies in the last twenty years, in particular the ones dealing with the regional commissions and decentralization of the economic and social activities to the regional level.

2. This report is intended as a contribution to the on-going debates on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations economic and social sectors and should, therefore, be considered in conjunction with parallel efforts such as strengthening the position of regional commissions as the main United Nations centres at the regional level for economic and social development, and the restructuring of the Secretariat that the Secretary-General has already undertaken.

3. The Inspector holds the view that the best that can be done at this stage is to: (a) have a clearer insight into the way the regional commissions are realizing their multi-disciplinary potential in response to the development needs of Member States; and (b) suggest, on the basis of the analysis of the available data, some possible measures for consideration by Member States, the Secretary-General and his senior colleagues which could give further impetus to the restructuring process.

4. Thus, this report endeavours both to address the future role and activities of the regional commissions and to highlight the desirable division of responsibilities among the respective organizational entities in the system, their current problems in implementing decentralization and co-ordination as well as issues of programme and administrative management.

5. In the preparation of the report, the Inspector relied on a number of United Nations documents, and especially on two recent reports of the Secretary-General, namely "Agenda for Peace"[2] and "Agenda for Development"[3] as well as those of JIU, which specifically examined the role and activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),[4] the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP),[5] the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)[6] and technical co-operation between UNDP and three of the regional commissions: ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP. The JIU reports devoted to the reform of the United Nations and decentralization were also very helpful.[7]

6. The co-operation of all those consulted in the course of the study is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are due to delegates and individuals for their valuable views and also to the United Nations officials at Headquarters and in the regions. Finally, the Inspector wishes to pay tribute to Inspector B. Prokofiev, who at the initial stage of the work, was closely associated with this study up until his retirement from the Joint Inspection Unit.

I. REGIONAL COMMISSIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECTORS

7. Practically from the earliest days of the United Nations, it was held that many problems relating to economic and social development could be tackled most effectively in the geographic regions where they originate. This was the basis for the establishment of five commissions, namely for: Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Europe (ECE) both in 1947, Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1948, Africa (ECA) in 1958, and Western Asia (ESCWA) in 1973. The regional commissions have been playing an important role in developing a policy of economic integration and clarifying economic, social, political and environmental issues relating to sustainable development. Along with other organs of the United Nations, they have been active in contributing to global policies and programmes legislated by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The combination of the regional commissions' functions makes them rather unique bodies in the United Nations system. Over the years, they have developed into the main United Nations centres for economic and social development at the regional level.

A. Functions of the regional commissions

8. The United Nations regional commissions share a number of common features such as major objectives (raising the level of development of their members, fostering co-operation within their respective regions, and between them and other parts of the world), and principal functions (collection, evaluation and dissemination of relevant data, studies on social and economic problems, initiation and negotiation of co-ordinated policies, carrying out operational projects, etc.). Another feature common to all the regional commissions had been sectoral organization of their programmes and staffing. The content of their programmes and their programme approach, however, are different due mostly to specifics of the commissions' respective regions. Thus ECLAC for example, is more research - oriented than the other commissions, while ESCAP, in comparison with the other commissions, is putting much more emphasis on operational activities.

9. The above does not imply that, with time, the regional commissions' functions remained unchanged. Their evolution, provoked by a number of factors, took different directions. The first, especially since resolutions 32/197 and 33/202[8] were adopted, has been the expansion of technical co-operation activities. These are defined by the United Nations programme procedures as "operational", while gathering information and carrying out studies are termed as "substantive".

10. The second, resulting from increasing complexity of development problems, has been a progressive movement from a sectoral towards a cross-sectoral approach. It has to be recognized, however, that despite the largely sectoral organization of the United Nations programmes, as well as of the United Nations intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors, the inter-disciplinary approach has always been present in varying degrees in the commissions' activities. Thus, attempting to realize their natural advantage of having staff cutting across many sectors for inter-disciplinary work, ECE, for example, was giving priority attention to such inter-sectoral programmes as economic analysis, science and technology, environment, energy. ESCAP has organized and been operating regional inter-agency committees and task forces covering various fields of multi-sectoral activities, such as integrated rural development, environment and development, water, social development strategy, human resources development, etc.

11. However, in the last two - three years, the multisectoral approach to developmental problems became much more pronounced in activities of the regional commissions, particularly those of ESCAP, which in 1992 adopted a thematic programme orientation. ECLAC, which has been using a multidisciplinary approach for a number of years recently produced a series of cross-sectoral studies, e.g., "Changing production patterns with social equity" (1990); "Sustainable Development: changing production patterns, social equity and the environment" (1991); "Social equity and changing production patterns: an integrated approach" (1992), as well as ECLAC's annual publication "Preliminary overview of the Latin American and Caribbean Economy".

12. The third major development in the regional commissions' activities is their increasing involvement in political matters, following the orientation, suggested by the Secretary-General in his report "Agenda for Peace", to seek greater integration between socio-economic and political sectors of the Organization. In this regard, it may be mentioned, for example, that ECLAC co-sponsored the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, preparatory to the World Conference on Human Rights (San José, January, 1993). It also participated, albeit in a marginal role, in El-Salvador's peace-building initiatives through an analysis of the economic consequences of the peace accords; and provided technical support to several Presidential fora, including the Meeting of Heads of State of Central America and Panama (Panama, December 1992; Guatemala, November 1993), the Heads of State of the Rio Group (Buenos Aires, December 1992; Santiago, Chile, November 1993) and the Ibero-American Meeting of Heads of State and Government (San Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, July 1993). It is also worth mentioning that ECLAC has provided support for discussions on NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement).

13. Over the last year, ECA assisted in peace-making negotiations and rehabilitation activities in Somalia. From the perspective of the pre-emptive prevention of conflicts, ECA is gearing itself to provide better early-warning and analysis of social and economic developments which impinge on human security in its broad context and which are likely to impair peace and stability at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The twenty-eight session of the Commission (3-6 May 1993), recognized that ECA's role in the Agenda for Peace was in early warning and in rehabilitation and reconstruction.

14. Finally, it needs to be mentioned that, recently, the mandates of two commissions, namely ECE and ESCAP have been seriously affected by their increased membership. Over the last two years, the number of ECE members has grown from 34 to 54, that of ESCAP from 48 to 58 (including 10 associate members). Both commissions have become the largest fora in their respective regions. New members, especially those which joined the two commissions as a result of disintegration and systemic transformation in the Eastern part of the ECE region, are countries in transition and have brought their specific problems that need to be accommodated in the commissions' work programmes. Thus, assistance to these countries, with a view to integrating them into the European and the world economy, has become part and parcel of their overall work.

B. Comparative advantages of the regional commissions

15. The changes that are taking place in the post-cold war era, inter alia, raise the possibility of emergence of new patterns of national, regional and international division of labour on the basis of comparative advantages. This phenomenon is of significant relevance to the socio-economic activities being carried out by the United Nations and the more so because of serious financial difficulties facing the Organization. In essence, almost the whole issue of decentralization to the regional level revolves around the problem of comparative advantages of the Secretariat entities concerned and other international organizations active in the same areas of activity.

16. At present it is widely recognized that capacities of the regional commissions derive from the following comparative advantages that they enjoy:

(a) proximity to regional governments;

(b) ability to appreciate changing or emergency requirements;

(c) experience in dealing with complex development issues through accumulated multisectoral expertise;

(d) close contacts and network of focal points established with various government departments, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs in different sectors of economic and social development;

(e) close involvement of the Member countries both as source and destination of all analytical work and operational activities, thereby forcing the regional commissions to constantly adapt themselves to meet the emerging priorities and needs of its members;

(f) many years' experience in developing functional linkages between substantive and operational activities. (This experience, in varying degrees, is also characteristic to some other departments, e.g. DDSMS and its predecessor - DTCD.)

17. In addition to the above, the regional commissions enjoy individual advantages. It is recognized, for example, that ESCAP has distinct advantages in operational activities in several fields such as energy, natural resources, remote sensing and transport.[9] ECE's comparative advantages, vis-à-vis other organizations in Europe, include its most comprehensive membership which allows UN/ECE to serve as a multilateral forum for all-European co-operation in the economic and related fields, with an important trans-Atlantic dimension. This role of ECE was reaffirmed at its forty-eighth session (19-27 April 1993), which is significant given the multitude of other regional organizations in the region. ECE also possesses a proven ability to negotiate international conventions and other binding documents between its Member States. These advantages underpinned by its long experience and recognized expertise, in the view of many ECE members, enabled the Commission to address regional issues from a unique vantage point, and as such to have an important role to play in complementing and contributing to the work on related issues of other institutions.[10]

C. Commissions' new challenges

18. For several years now, the world has been witnessing dramatic political, economic and social changes. They have opened up new opportunities for closer co-operation within the international community, but they have also brought new challenges.

19. Thus for ECA, the current challenges are related to the fact that the economies of a number of African countries are being ravaged by inter-ethnic and civil wars accompanying their transition to multi-party democracy. The particular feature of Africa is that it is the only continent where, from 1980 to date, the economic output continues to decline which results in decreased average income and deepening poverty as well as famine. Africa's external debt, by the end of 1992, reached a total of US$ 282 billion, equivalent to 350 per cent of Africa's aggregate export revenue.

20. Ten strategic objectives have been identified to cope with the challenges that face Africa in the 1990s: a negotiated continental framework for regional security, stability and peace; establishment of the African Economic Community through prompt implementation of the Abuja Treaty; a comprehensive programme for building human capacities; re-defining the role of the state in Africa; sustainable development of the continent's agricultural potential to achieve food security; sustainable development of the industrial base founded on increasing added value; upgrading transport, communication and energy infrastructures for the creation of a single African market; effective participation in all on-going global consultations on future international division of labour; a new pragmatic approach to Africa's co-operation with both developing and advanced countries; and mobilization of the required capital resources.

21. In the ECE region, recent developments were dominated by disintegration and systemic transformation in Eastern and Central Europe and in the countries which constituted the former Soviet Union. They have not only brought about radically new conditions internally but also have created new laws for what was traditionally referred to as East-West relations. The fundamental decision of central and east European countries to opt for democratic political systems and market economies have made the former concept of co-operation between countries with two different social and economic systems obsolete.

22. As mentioned above, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia has given rise to a sharp increase in ECE membership from 34 two years ago to 54 today. The increase is significant not only because of the mere numbers, but also because it embodies a fundamental change in the nature of ECE membership. Now, one half of ECE members are countries in transition, all of which, according to the Commission, will have qualified for IPF status with the UNDP. For all intents and purposes many of them are developing countries.

23. In this context, it is worth noting that recent international developments, including implications for the United Nations system of the transition process in Eastern and Central Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States, were among the principal items on ACC's agenda in 1992. Among ACC's conclusions on the matter were that the provision of assistance to the States in transition was a challenge that would require collective action by the whole United Nations system with the focus on strengthening of democratic institutions and market economy structures, diplomatic assistance in settling conflicts and humanitarian aid.[11] In its resolution 48/181, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to study "while continuing the existing co-operation with relevant international institutions and entities, possible areas of economic and technical co-operation among countries with economies in transition, as well as with the developing countries, identifying the role the United Nations system could play in this field, with a view to encouraging greater participation by those countries in the world economy".[12]

24. In the ESCAP region, recent political changes (success of free and fair elections in Cambodia, reduced scale and intensity of violence in Afghanistan, advance towards democracy in some other countries) have considerably improved the prospects for international and regional co-operation for development. These are finding a new expression in the existing structures for such co-operation. In this context, it needs to be mentioned that for several years now, growth of intra-regional trade has consistently out-performed the growth in global trade. However, the high average rate of growth for the region as a whole marks tremendous variations within the region and within countries. Therefore, of particular concern for ESCAP are poverty, inadequate levels of health and nutrition, high rates of population growth and environmental deterioration in some countries of the region.

25. At its forty-ninth (21-29 April 1993) and fiftieth (5-13 April 1994) sessions, the Commission underscored the urgent need to spread the development momentum to all countries of the region through the expansion of trade, increased investment and national capacity-building. In this context, in resolution 49/3, it invited all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies concerned as well as regional and sub-regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, multilateral funding agencies, bilateral aid agencies and donor governments, to provide technical and financial assistance to the region's least developed, island developing and disadvantaged economies in transition in order to achieve the objectives of the Tehran Declaration on Strengthening Regional Co-operation for Technology-Led Industrialization in Asia and the Pacific.[13]

26. Also at its forty-ninth session, the Commission noted that there were possibilities for its involvement in determining the socio-economic parameters for peace-building activities of the United Nations in the region and for extending ESCAP's mandate in the area of emergency humanitarian activities. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the need to establish, at the right time, the linkage between humanitarian assistance and economic and social reconstruction where the commission will have a role to play is under discussion between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the commissions.

27. In the ECLAC region, which witnessed some hopeful signs and some daunting challenges to development, namely: the consolidation of pluralistic, participatory political systems and gradual taking root of democracy in most countries; improvement in macro-economic management; a gradual transformation of the productive sectors, increased international competitiveness and

improved entrepreneurial capacity; improved savings and investment ratios; and finally, a renewed commitment to intra-regional co-operation. Major challenges are those of extremely regressive economic adjustment, greater incidence of poverty, worsened income distribution and aggravation of social inequalities.

28. In Western Asia, where regional co-operation has suffered a setback as a result of the Gulf crisis, the need to restore confidence in collective work and co-operation came to the forefront of the preoccupations and challenges confronting ESCWA. Another major challenge facing the region is in the area of natural resources, the main problem being inadequacy of planning and management of its water, energy and mineral resources. The tasks of Member States in addressing this situation are complicated by shortage of water resources, uneven distribution of energy sources and a lack of articulated national and regional strategies for balancing environmental concerns and natural resources development and exploitation.

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29. It may be added to the above that the past few years have seen a resurgence of interest in integration arrangements centering on common markets, customs unions or free trade areas. To name a few, process of co-operation in the APEC framework, the discussions on the East Asian Economic Caucus, the recent ASEAN decision to establish a free trade area, SAARC and the Mekong Committee are all examples of efforts to foster closer co-operation between countries with similar interests. Groupings aimed at enhancing economic co-operation among developing countries are also being strengthened. Large economic spaces involving key trading partners have emerged, which could contribute to trade liberalization and through their growth effects, impart new dynamism to the multilateral trading system.

30. Yet, if managed without due regard to the principles, rules and disciplines of multilateralism, they could become inward looking, shift the burden of adjustment to third parties, cause trade diversion and other problems for other countries and increase the potential for trade disputes and tensions. In this regard the principle of subsidiarity needs to be applied which means that the responsibility to deal with an issue should be left to that level at which it can be tackled most effectively. This important principle implies certain division of labour and distribution of responsibility at various levels: national, regional and global. With regard to the above regional issues there is undoubtedly a role to play by the regional commissions.

31. As the above suggests, the regional commissions are being confronted with unprecedented challenges in political, economic and related areas. In this context, the question of whether the commissions, as presently equipped, are able to contribute effectively to solutions of the above problems is unavoidable.

32. The Inspector agrees with the Secretary-General that the regional commissions are a unique asset and can make an important contribution to the enhancement of co-operation for development. At a time when strengthened regional co-operation holds the key to the resolution of conflicts and to economic and social progress in so many spheres, the potential of the regional commissions and their secretariats should be better exploited for the benefit of their constituents and the Organization as a whole. Indeed, enhancing the efficiency of the regional commissions would maximize the impact of the work of United Nations economic and social development as well as in related fields. This, in turn, depends, to a large extent, on the provision of adequate resources both financial and human. The present resource situation and its evolution over the last four biennia are analyzed below.

D. Resources of the commissions

(a) financial resources

33. The regional commissions account for an important part of the United Nations economic, social and related activities. Their regular budget appropriations constitute some 44-45 per cent of those made for these sectors. As to the commissions' aggregate share in the overall financing of the Organization, according to the United Nations estimates, it will reach some 7.2 per cent in 1994-1995 budget period. This figure will represent an increase in comparison with the previous biennium but will still be lower than in the 1990-1991 (7.6 per cent) and the 1988-1989 (8.3 per cent) periods. The evolution of the overall resources made available to the regional commissions in the 1988-1995 period is reflected in table 1 below.

Table 1: Financial resources of regional economic commissions (Millions of United States dollars)

Regional Commissions (budget sections)	1988 - 1989 revised appropriation		1990 - 1991 revised appropriation		1992 - 1993 revised appropriation		1994 - 1995 estimates	
	RB	EXB	RB	EXB	RB	EXB	RB	EXB
ECA (Section 15)	51.2	27.9	59.1	37.2	72.0	34.3	82.7	35.0
ECE (Section 17)	34.6	4.1	37.7	4.9	42.5	7.3	46.3	6.0
ECLAC (Section 18)	42.8	24.3	57.4	26.8	67.3	28.6	90.0	13.3
ESCAP (Section 16)	35.8	39.1	41.5	43.0	55.3	31.4	64.7	25.3
ESCWA (Section 19)	36.8	4.5	42.6	5.4	45.3	2.7	43.2	3.0
Sub-total Commissions	201.2	99.9	238.3	117.3	282.4	104.3	326.9	82.6
Total United Nations	1444.3	2164.1	1752.4	2945.6	1996.4	3083.6	2228.8	3419.6

Source: Proposed programme documents for the respective biennia.

34. The table above suggests that, over 1988-1993, the aggregate regular budget of the commissions constituted 13.9 - 14.1 per cent of the Organizations's regular budget. In 1994-1995, it will increase to the level of 14.6 per cent due, in particular, to the redeployment of resources under the Regular programme of technical co-operation (see paras 154-156 below).

35. There has been no uniformity in the evolution of the regular budget appropriations of individual commissions. As follows from table 2 on page 8, in 1988-1989 all regional commissions witnessed negative rates of real growth which is attributable mostly to decrease in travel of staff, consultants' services, external printing, etc. For some commissions, for example, this negative growth was preceded by many years of zero-growth budget; in the case of ECE, for example, since 1976. In 1990-1991, zero-growth in real terms, was characteristic to three regional commissions

(ESCAP, ECE, ESCWA), whereas the resources of the other two increased insignificantly (ECA - 0.3 per cent and ECLAC - 0.9 per cent). In 1992-1993, only ESCWA maintained the zero budget while the resources of other commissions increased (ECLAC - 0.7 per cent, ECE - 1.3 per cent, ESCAP - 2.0 per cent and ECA - 2.7 per cent). In the current biennium, ECA will keep the highest rate of growth (2.7 per cent), followed by ECLAC (2.1 per cent), ESCAP (1.5 per cent) and ECE (0.5 per cent).

Table 2: Commissions' regular budget resources: rate of real growth

Commission / Biennia	Rate of real growth (%)				
	ECA	ECE	ECLAC	ESCAP	ESCWA
1988 - 1989	(0.1)	(0.9)	(1.0)	(0.7)	(1.1)
1990 - 1991	0.3	0	0.9	0	0
1992 - 1993	2.7	1.3	0.7	2.0	0
1994 - 1995	2.6	0.5	2.1	1.5	0.4

Source: Proposed programme budget documents for the respective biennia.

36. Given the slight growth in budgetary allocations in the current biennium the regional commissions will continue to have difficulties in carrying out their regular activities. Thus at the twenty-eighth session of ECA, the Conference of Ministers requested the General Assembly to provide the Commission with the necessary budgetary resources to enable it, in particular, to:

- carry out effectively and efficiently the first mid-term evaluation of the second United Nations Transport and Communication Decade in Africa in 1994, as stipulated in the implementation strategy;

- organize two regional workshops to disseminate the strategy and promote the objectives of the Second Decade;[14]

- carry out activities aimed at strengthening industrial co-operation within the context of the Industrial Development Decade;[15]

- permit the delivery of activities to the Commissions's sub-programme[16] on information systems development;

- stabilize the financing of the core posts of IDEP.[17]

37. In the course of the second part of CPC's thirty-third session (6-22 October 1993), several delegations felt that the growth level of the ECA 1994-1995 budget was not commensurate with the tasks to be undertaken. A similar view was held on the budgets of ECE and ESCAP, particularly taking into account their expanded workload and increased membership.[18]

38. The extrabudgetary resources of the commissions constitute a small fraction of the extrabudgetary resources made available to the United Nations. Moreover, over the years, the share of the regional commissions has been steadily declining. As table 1 suggests, in 1988-1989 it represented some 4.6 per cent of the total extrabudgetary resources of the Organization, in 1990-1991 - 4.0 per cent, in 1992-1993 - 3.4 per cent. In 1994-1995, it would further fall to some 2.4 per cent and, in absolute figures, will be significantly below the lowest figure in the period 1988-1995. In the current biennium, the share of extrabudgetary resources made available

to all regional commissions would constitute about 25 per cent of their total financing, compared to 33.2 per cent in 1988-1989, 33.7 per cent in 1990-1991, and 27 per cent in 1992-1993.

39. As to individual commissions, table 1 shows that, in current US dollars, the amount of extrabudgetary resources would increase only for ECA (1.9 per cent), and ESCWA (10.2 per cent). Other commissions would suffer a decrease of extrabudgetary resources. The extrabudgetary resources of ESCAP in 1994-1995 would reduce by nearly 20 per cent, which will follow the decrease of some 26.9 per cent in the previous biennium. In 1994-1995, the extrabudgetary resources of ECLAC would represent less than half of those made available to ECLAC in 1992-1993.

40. In this connection, it also needs to be mentioned that extrabudgetary funding would be reduced from both bilateral and multilateral sources, in particular from UNDP and UNFPA. Despite the decrease, UNDP remains the largest source of financing technical co-operation projects executed by the regional commissions. UNFPA's support, expressed, inter alia, through funding of a number of Professional and General Service posts would be reduced as a result of creating UNFPA Country Support Teams which necessitated the transfer of UNFPA funded regional advisers based in the regional commissions to UNFPA/CSTs.

41. As follows from the above, the decrease in extrabudgetary resources most seriously affects the technical co-operation activities of ESCAP and ECLAC. In particular, serious financial constraints are being faced by CELADE and ESCAP's three regional institutions: APCTT, CGPRT Centre, SIAP and RNAM.

42. The reduction of resources allocated to the regional commissions for population-related activities is a matter of special concern to them. The regional commissions' main complaints in connection with the UNFPA reduced financing, inter alia, are: (a) serious weakening of their existing capacity to deal with population-related issues; (b) duplication of efforts; (c) rupture between research activities carried out by regional commissions and advisory services provided by UNFPA/CSTs which affects the quality of the latter; and (d) that the activities of UNFPA/CSTs do not extend to all members and associate members of the commissions, while the latter have a useful role to play in population-related areas. In this context it may be noted, for example, that the Bali Declaration adopted at the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (19-27 August, 1992) gave the ESCAP Secretariat an expanded mandate to assist countries of the region in dealing with a number of population-related issues.

43. UNFPA gives three main reasons for setting up CSTs, e.g.: (a) bringing experts from United Nations agencies into one office which results in better co-ordination of their activities; (b) reduction of administrative and supporting staff; and (c) functioning under the direct supervision of UNFPA.

44. The Inspector notes that the JIU Work Programme for 1994-1995 provides for an in-depth study to be undertaken on the new relationship between UNFPA and the regional economic commissions. Together with an in-depth evaluation of Technical Support Services (TSS) commissioned by UNFPA, this study would help to judge whether or not the current collaboration on UNFPA/Country Support Teams matches the previous co-operation arrangement whereby regional economic commissions were the executing agencies of regional population projects, as well as of national population projects having a specific regional extension.

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45. By way of conclusion, the Inspector would like to observe that technical co-operation expenditures of the regional commissions is only about four per cent of technical co-operation expenditures of the Organization, which reflects the commissions' marginal role in its operational activities. The Inspector believes that undoubted scope exists for the regional commissions to make a larger commitment to the operational activities of the United Nations system.

46. Indeed, in recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the demand by members and associate members of the regional commissions for technical co-operation activities owing to the enlargement of their membership, the emergence of the disadvantaged economies in transition, new regional initiatives in the field of economic co-operation, and the urgency of environmentally sound and sustainable development. Growing demand for regional commissions' technical co-operation activities is a common feature for all the geographical regions.

47. As the reduction in the UNDP and UNFPA contributions to the regional commissions' technical co-operation programmes is expected to continue, the problem of ensuring increased support from bilateral donors and alternative modes of resource provision has become critical. In this regard, it will be recalled that, on many occasions, the General Assembly, sessions of the regional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies, expressed serious concern about inadequacy of the resources available for operational activities. Thus, the General Assembly in its resolutions 44/211 and 47/199 stressed "the need for a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries".[19]

48. Without prejudice to the attempts to seek increased financing from bilateral donors it has, however, to be recognized that international organizations and governments around the world are facing demands on their resources that often far outstrip their ability to raise new funds. The need to allocate carefully Member States' limited resources to where they will do the most good has never been more pressing. The adverse changing trends in resource flows for development aid globally including the stagnant ODA of donor countries is an immediate reflection of this situation.

49. With regard to alternative methods of resource provision, revised and reformed systems of budgetary and extrabudgetary allocations is a possibility. In this context, it will be recalled that ECOSOC, in its resolution 1992/43, recommended all relevant bodies of the United Nations system dealing with development, when preparing technical co-operation programmes, to co-ordinate their work with the regional commissions with view to achieving a better and more focused use of available resources, greater coherence of action and, therefore, greater and more concentrated impact.[20]

50. The regional commissions also have a proactive role to play in this regard. At the fifteenth session of ESCAP, for example, some delegations suggested that the secretariat should explore a resource multiplier strategy by examining closely the activities of other United Nations agencies, particularly UNDP, in the region. They further suggested that the secretariat should enter into serious dialogue with UNDP and ADB.[21]

51. One of the effective means of ensuring optimal use of finite resources and of avoiding duplication of work within the regions would be for the regional commissions and global programmes such as UNEP, UNCHS, and UNCTAD (the case of UNFPA is referred to in paras. 42-44 above) to set up joint units where all these programmes maintain or propose to strengthen regional offices. The multi-year experience of the ECE/FAO Agriculture and Timber Division, as well as of the joint ESCWA/FAO Agriculture Division, for example, suggests that this kind of arrangement between the regional commissions and global programmes may be successful and cost effective for the partners concerned. The specialized agencies and global programmes should be encouraged to establish joint units/divisions with the regional commissions with a view to ensuring a more systematic approach towards assisting their constituents.

52. Implementation of projects through greater co-operation with other appropriate institutions involved in economic, social and related activities in the respective regions offers another possibility for more efficient and effective use of the commissions' limited resources. Because of financial constraints, complementarity of actions exercised by those institutions and the regional commissions is acquiring increasing importance. Therefore, the Inspector believes that the work of the commissions should take into account the activities carried out by other United Nations regional agencies as well as those of global organizations (e.g. multilateral financial institutions),

bilateral donors, and of non-governmental organizations active in the same or adjacent areas. The regional commissions should make an inventory of these organizations together with an analysis of their areas of competence and programmes of work, which would help them to: (a) define the areas where the regional commissions can be most effective and, accordingly, determine appropriate priorities; (b) establish closer co-operation with them; and (c) ensure complementarity of action.

53. In the Inspector's view, the regional commissions should increasingly concentrate their resources on priority areas where they could make a unique and significant contribution and either readjust or abandon activities which do not fall into this category. The commissions should strive, utilizing in full measure their comparative advantages, including multi-sectoral expertise, to become centres of excellence for specific activities of a regional or sub-regional character, or country-specific activities having a regional extension.

(b) human resources

Table 3: HUMAN RESOURCES OF UN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS (regular budget)

Posts / Commissions	1988 - 1989			1990 - 1991			1992 - 1993			1994 - 1995*		
	P	GS	TOTAL	P	GS	TOTAL	P	GS	TOTAL	P	GS	TOTAL
ECA	222	377	599	211	374	585	220	375	595	221	377	598
ECE	114	92	206	114	92	206	115	92	207	115	92	207
ECLAC	178	345	523	176	345	521	178	345	523	180	346	526
ESCAP	180	314	494	180	314	494	181	314	495	181	327	508
ESCWA	98	188	286	99	188	287	99	188	287	102	187	289
Total	792	1316	2108	780	1313	2093	793	1314	2107	799	1329	2128

* The figures for 1994-1995 do not include additional posts to be made available to the regional commissions as a result of decentralization of activities in the areas of energy and natural resources.

Source: United Nations budget documents.

54. The table above gives a general indication of human resources of the regional commissions, as they are reflected in the official documentation readily available to Member States. These data suggest that over the period 1994-1995, there has been no significant change in regular budget personnel.

55. The situation with regard to human resources differs from one regional commission to another, however, in ECE and ESCWA it is the most difficult. Thus because of the ten-year zero growth budget there has been no increase in ECE regular staff. Moreover, in the retrenchment exercise of 1989, the ECE lost 12 per cent of its established posts (27 in all). At present, with 207 established posts, ECE is the smallest of the regional commissions. It also has the smallest number of extrabudgetary posts.

56. Until recently, ECE, ESCAP and ESCWA maintained very high vacancy rates. The commissions' secretariats attribute them mostly to the 1987 as well as the most recent suspension of recruitment and to only a few exceptions granted. In the case of ESCWA, the major factors of high vacancy rates also included the uncertainty over the secretariat headquarters, and the failure of some Member States to use up their quotas for technical posts.[22]

57. Issues of high vacancy rates and their impact on implementation of the world programmes were repeatedly raised at the commissions' sessions, including the seventeenth session of ESCWA[23] and forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions of ECE. By way of example, ECE, at its forty-seventh session, adopted decision B (47) on the provision of adequate resources for the priority sectors of ECE, which was transmitted directly to the Secretary-General as an expression of the Commission's serious concern in this regard. In decision E (48), the Commission again expressed concern that unfilled vacancies at the professional level were seriously impeding both technical and practical work of importance to Member States, as well as the ability of the secretariat to respond to the growing needs of countries in transition. Consequently, the Commission referred the procedural difficulties encountered in recruiting qualified personnel, and reaffirmed the importance attached by Member States to urgent action to provide the resources necessary to maintain ECE's efficiency and effectiveness.

58. A concern about high vacancy rates in the regional commissions, particularly that of ECE, and its impact on the Commission's performance was also expressed by a number of delegations during the thirty-third session of CPC.[24]

59. The Inspector was informed by the Budget Division of the United Nations Secretariat that, recently, quite a number of vacancies in the regional commissions had been filled, which brought down the vacancy rates. ESCWA and ESCAP, however, continue to maintain vacancy rates significantly above the overall vacancy rate (in 1993, 7.6 per cent for Professionals and 1.6 per cent for General Service). As at the end of May 1994, the regional commissions' vacancy were as follows:

	Professional Staff	General Service Staff
ECA	5.8%	3.8%
ECE	6.1%%	3.4%
ECLAC	5.5%	1.7%
ESCAP	12.0%	6.1%
ESCWA	15.3%	8.0%

60. It is worth mentioning, however, that table 3 on page 11 shows neither the number of junior professional officers (JPOs) nor the number of non-reimbursable experts. As mentioned in a previous JIU report (see JIU/REP/90/3), Headquarters officials were unaware of the actual number of staff working in the regional commissions because the latter are not obliged to report on the above two categories of staff. Nor did these officials have précise knowledge of the professional composition of staff of the commissions. The Inspector believes that both factors create difficulties in terms of accountability and reporting which should be improved. In this context, it will be recalled that resolution 48/218 recommended to the Secretary-General to establish, by 1 January 1995, a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility

II. PAST ATTEMPTS AT DECENTRALIZATION TO THE REGIONAL LEVEL

61. Reforming the structure and functions of the United Nations is a virtually continuous process. Over the years, beginning in the first decade of the Organization's existence, a variety of expert groups and intergovernmental bodies have considered the functioning of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors and made recommendations for change including those on decentralization to the regional level. Few, however, have had an enduring impact.

62. It was during the 1970s that the United Nations undertook one of its most ambitious efforts to restructure the institutional machinery of international economic co-operation. Two main objectives were to ensure:

(a) a more comprehensive approach to development assistance through improved co-ordination between the United Nations entities involved in relevant activities; and

(b) a more decentralized focus of the activities carried out in Headquarters.

If attained, the latter objective could have led to a transfer of certain programme elements and of the staff concerned closer to the field, in particular to the regional commissions.

A. The Capacity study and its effects

63. The Capacity study[25] generally also known as the "Jackson report" constituted a background for restructuring efforts in the 1970s. Basically, the report recommended fundamental institutional reform of the United Nations development system and proposed two innovations: (a) an integrated programming system, the United Nations Development Co-ordination Cycle; and (b) the conceptual design for an information system.

64. In accordance with the cycle system, most of the volume of resources expected over this period was set aside for country programmes, with each country allotted an "indicative planning figure" (IPF), the remainder was allotted to regional and global projects.

65. As a result of the report's criticisms over the structure of the system, its Headquarters were completely re-organized, with four regional offices, corresponding to activities in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa. Thus, regional orientation became more pronounced in United Nations developmental activities.

66. In December 1970, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2688 (XXV) on the capacity of the United Nations development system. This resolution embodied the 1970 consensus as to how UNDP should operate and relate to the specialized agencies and other parts of the System. The country programming approach and all the implications for operational activities were put into motion by this resolution. The concept of UNDP as a central fund for the United Nations system can also be traced to the 1970 consensus.

B. Resolution 32/197 and its implementation

(a) mandate of the commissions

67. In 1975, the group of experts set up by General Assembly resolution A/RES/3343 (XXIX), issued a report entitled "A new United Nations Structure for Global Economic Co-operation".[26] The report provided the background for the restructuring and covered issues of both substance and procedure.

68. In 1977, by adopting resolution 32/197, the General Assembly undertook another major effort to restructure the United Nations economic and social sectors. This restructuring exercise, entailing two years of strenuous negotiations and debate, was intimately linked to the new

international economic order programme, which originated at the Sixth and Seventh special sessions of the General Assembly held in 1974 and 1975, respectively. The resolution mandated a large number of changes, some structural, in the functioning of the United Nations, including the creation of the post of Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. This resolution also mandated changes in the operation of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other fora for negotiations.

69. For the purpose of the present report, it needs to be observed that Section IV of the Annex to resolution 32/197 contained the most comprehensive legislative statement of the contributions expected of the regional commissions made by the Assembly since the adoption of their terms of reference.

70. Thus, paragraph 19 of this Section provided that "the regional commissions should be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council as the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions, having due regard to the responsibilities of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies in specific sectoral fields and the co-ordinating role of the United Nations Development Programme in respect of technical co-operation activities".[27] By designating the regional commissions as "the main general economic and social centres", resolution 32/197, in fact put the relations between the centre and the regions in the economic and social structures of the United Nations into a new perspective, in which the regional commissions were called upon to perform for their regional members a role akin to that performed at the global level by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in the economic and social sectors.

71. In paragraph 20, resolution 32/197 called upon the regional commissions to "exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level",[28] taking into account the specific needs and conditions of their respective regions. The resolution provided that the regional commissions might convene periodic meetings, as necessary, for the purpose of improving co-ordination of the relevant economic and social activities of the United Nations system in their respective regions.

72. Of utmost importance for the regional commissions was that part of the resolution dealing with the strengthening of relations between regional commissions and the organizations of the United Nations system, including setting up appropriate arrangements "to enable the regional commissions to participate actively in operational activities carried out through the United Nations system".[29] The resolution also provided for the necessary delegation of authority and provision of adequate budgetary and financial resources to enable the commissions to discharge their expanded responsibilities effectively (para. 26).

(b) implementation

(i) decentralization

73. The implementation of the resolution's provisions relating to the regional commissions was subsequently the subject of detailed consideration by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. This resulted in the Assembly and the Council adopting a number of resolutions, including General Assembly resolutions 33/202 of 29 January 1979[30] and 37/214 of 20 December 1982,[31] focusing mainly on the process of decentralization and the role of the regional commissions in the field of technical assistance. Thus, resolution 33/202 granted the regional commissions the status of executing agencies (part V, para. 3).

74. In considering activities suitable for decentralization, the Secretary-General was concerned with retaining and enhancing the integrated nature of the role and functions of the United Nations as a whole, and avoiding an excessive compartmentalization of activities at the regional or global level. In his report to the General Assembly in 1984, the Secretary-General further identified four specific types of activities for decentralization: (a) those that require empirical research and analysis

of data and information largely within the regional/sub-regional context; (b) follow-up activities at the regional, sub-regional and national levels consequent upon international years and anniversaries and global conferences; (c) activities to promote inventories of capabilities and capacities at the regional, sub-regional and national levels, such as inventories of technological institutions and agencies, for example, in the science and technology programme; and (d) activities to promote economic and technical co-operation among developing countries.[32]

75. This process of decentralization, however, did not lead to any significant redeployment of United Nations staff to field offices. Not entirely surprising, since posts were established within the context of particular programmes and, by the nature of the process, neither the posts nor the incumbent Headquarters personnel proved readily redeployable.[33]

76. In 1988, in his report to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operations, an independent consultant commenting on the implementation of resolution 32/197 noted: "the centralizing tendencies of the United Nations system, both as to expanded headquarters staffing and detailed central direction of programme and administration, have remained in the ascendancy".[34] Furthermore, he observed that though there had been some expansion in the regional commission of management functions and related staff in the areas of finance, personnel, and administration, but these were matched by an even greater expansion of management staff at New York Headquarters under the rationale of a requirement to monitor in detail the performance of the expanded administrative staff in the regional commissions.[35]

77. While it is true that so far only limited decentralization has taken place from the United Nations Headquarters to the regional commissions, there has been much greater decentralization from the global to the regional level by various United Nations bodies and agencies which resulted in the establishment of their own regional, sub-regional and national programmes and offices. This decentralization, however, has been carried out in a fragmented, unco-ordinated and, therefore, inefficient and duplicative manner. But if at the country level the decentralization was followed by efforts to consolidate those independent undertakings through the institution of resident co-ordinator, no similar attempts have yet been made at the regional level.

78. In its recent report on "Decentralization of Organizations within the United Nations System" (JIU/REP/92/6), the Joint Inspection Unit concluded that, "within the United Nations, implementation of resolution 32/197 did not result in strengthening complementarities and eliminating duplication between headquarters departments and the regional commissions, nor in any agreement in the course of fifteen years on decentralization of responsibilities and resources to the regions".[36] The author of the present report fully shares this point of view.

(ii) team leadership and co-ordination

79. With regard to the role of the regional commissions in team leadership and co-ordination, it is worth noting that they have made some efforts to provide a focal point for co-operation within their respective regions. Indeed, they have taken the lead for periodic inter-agency consultations in certain areas. Thus, in the discharge of its co-ordinating functions, ECA has established joint programming and formal working links with a number of specialized agencies and other units of the United Nations, including FAO, UNESCO, UNFPA. It also played a leading role in the formulation and implementation of the Transport and Communication Decade in Africa and in the preparation for and adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. A similar role has been played by ECE in the field of transport of dangerous goods. ESCAP has organized and been operating regional interagency committees and task forces covering various fields of multisectoral activities, such as integrated rural development, environment and development water, social development strategy, human resources development, etc. On balance, however, the role of the regional commissions in team leadership and co-operation has still been more ancillary rather than leading.[37] Neither resolution 32/197 nor the subsequent resolutions dealing with the regional commissions provided them with the necessary authority or resources to perform this role.

80. Recently, a number of intergovernmental meetings underscored the need to strengthen the role of the regional commissions to provide team leadership and co-ordination of the United Nations system activities with a regional perspective. In particular, at the twenty-eight session of ECA, the Conference of African Ministers responsible for economic development and planning called upon the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council "to provide an up-dated legislative framework for the regional commissions concretizing the far-reaching process of reorganization of the United Nations system, redistributing responsibilities among its entities, and the role of the regional commissions as arms of a single United Nations programme".[38] It also called upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations "to strengthen, through specific measures, the role of the Economic Commission for Africa as team leader and co-ordinator of the United Nations system activities with a regional perspective in order to ensure rational implementation of the strategic objectives for Africa's economic development within the context of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development for Africa in the 1990s".[39]

81. At the forty-ninth session of ESCAP (21-29 April 1993), it was suggested that the adequate authority should be delegated to the commissions to discharge their responsibilities for the co-ordination of regional activities of the United Nations in co-operation with the appropriate United programmes and specialized agencies.[40] This suggestion is reflected in the Commission's resolution 49/10 which stressed "an urgent need for co-ordination of the regional and sub-regional operational activities of the United Nations organizations, programmes and funds as well as those of the specialized agencies at the regional level".[41] The Commission urged that the role of ESCAP should be strengthened at the regional level, taking into account the comparative advantages that the regional commissions enjoy. It was also suggested that the executive secretaries of regional commissions should be the principal representatives of the Secretary-General for economic, social and related activities in their respective regions, and that ESCAP should play a leading co-ordinating role in the region.

(iii) towards regional governance

82. As shown elsewhere in this report, the process of decentralization of activities carried out by the specialized agencies and the United Nations global programmes resulted in the proliferation of their field programmes and offices. To increase the efficiency of the United Nations system at the field level, it became necessary to integrate those independent entities wherever appropriate.

83. Significant progress in this regard was achieved at the country level through the establishment of the institution of resident co-ordinator, but practically nothing similar happened at the regional level. If genuine co-ordination in the United Nations is to work it should permeate all the levels: global, country and, obviously, regional.

84. Given the multitude of regional offices and other outfits, financed by the same Member States, it is not unreasonable to ponder over complementarity and raise a number of questions, including those of co-operation between the regional commissions and other United Nations programmes (e.g. UNCHS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNEP). In theory, this should be the simplest matter to settle, but in practice the regional commissions often have more difficulties in their co-operation with other United Nations programmes than with outside institutions.

85. There is a potential also for improvement of co-operation between the regional commissions and the specialized agencies. In inter-agency committees and task forces operating at the regional level, it has regularly been reported that the respective United Nations bodies and agencies are constrained by their existing programme budgets from adjusting on-going or planned activities so as to establish better complementarities and eliminate possible overlap and duplication, and to generate the efficiencies implicit in close inter-agency collaboration. They consistently claim that they cannot adjust their programme budgets because these are based on the directives given to them by their governing bodies.

86. A means must be devised to overcome these difficulties, at least among the United Nations organizations and bodies, in order that practical, as distinct from rhetorical, co-ordination of work can be effected. The end of Cold War gave new urgency to international development and greater hope for economic progress throughout the world. Other multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, are attracting resources and building capacity to provide both technical assistance and development co-ordination. The United Nations system organizations must strengthen and streamline their complementary capacity in these areas. This is where, in the view of the Inspector, Member States should play a major role by taking more co-ordinated positions in the legislative bodies of the United Nations system, including the General Assembly, ECOSOC, UNDP Executive Board, sessions of the regional commissions, on economic, social and related activities carried out by agencies, organizations and other bodies of the system.

87. Apart from complementarity at the United Nations system level, there is a growing problem of complementarity with non-United Nations organizations. In fact, the United Nations system regional offices are acting in an increasingly competitive environment against the back-drop of the diversity of other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Regional arrangements and organizations are a growing phenomenon in the world. In South East Asia alone their number exceeds 350. Regional organizations provide development assistance of some US$ 5.5 billion each year.

88. The need for regional governance is obvious, and it has become a matter of urgency to designate in unambiguous terms the United Nations programme to lead action at the regional level. The question of which programme it should be is unavoidable. According to resolution 32/197, it should be the regional commissions, but the practice has been different in some regions. The comparative advantage here is the decisive factor, and it is rather competitiveness than complementarity.

89. Therefore, the Inspector supports the idea of reinforcing the activities of the regional commissions aimed at mutually supporting the activities of the global programmes and specialized agencies in their respective regions through, inter alia, identifying joint activities, programming exercises and co-ordinating meetings and mandating them as primary executing agencies for regional and sub-regional programmes, within the United Nations system. However, he believes that this mandate should not prevent the regional commissions from inviting other United Nations agencies and programmes to function as team leaders for specific programmes, when appropriate.

90. The Inspector is appreciative of the efforts made by the Secretary-General, at the level of ACC, aimed at enhancing the co-ordinating and team leadership role of the regional commissions through more systematic inter-agency consultations (annual meetings) to review overall trends, and exchange information on the programmes and initiatives of the various organizations. These meetings could then be followed, during the year, by consultations on specific activities that can benefit from greater inter-agency co-operation. If successful, this pattern of co-operation may develop into a regular mechanism, a kind of "regional ACCs", reporting and accountable to the central ACC for regional and sub-regional activities. By the same token, the regional commissions may be transformed into real "integrated United Nations regional centres", which will represent a major step in implementation of resolution 32/197. The Inspector believes that the afore-described strengthening of inter-agency arrangements at the regional level has a potential for considerable cost savings.

91. Therefore, the Inspector commends this initiative of the Secretary-General and invites Member States, through their representatives in the legislative bodies of organizations of the United Nations system, to accord it the necessary support.

C. The "Bertrand report"

92. In 1985, Maurice Bertrand, a JIU Inspector, issued a report entitled "Some reflections on reform of the United Nations"[42] (JIU/REP/85/9). The main idea of the report, underpinned by a critical analysis of the United Nations, was that the institution not only had to be modernized, but

radically reformed, so as to be more responsive to the hopes which a large proportion of the peoples of the United Nations continued to place in it. The fundamental argument was that the shortcomings of the United Nations system are not methodological, but structural, and the structure being so fragmented that the complexity of the institutions was a mystery.

93. The reform, in the view of the author of the report, should lead to the conception of a third-generation world Organization genuinely in keeping with the needs of the modern world. The report also suggested that the main focus should be on the transformation of the structures that support development and on the institution of a genuine world economic forum. The final aim would be to build up an "economic United Nations" side by side with the political United Nations.

94. Of specific interest to the present study is the argument that, to be successful, the United Nations system should consider development as an integrated, inter-disciplinary and regional process. Wherefrom the further logical step - the proposal to recast the present structure, with its centralized, sectoral agencies into a network of regional development agencies or enterprises.

95. The development aspect of reform of the United Nations system, in Bertrand's view, should be at the regional level. The structures would include all the main programmes such as UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF and so on, and most of the technical co-operation services of the main agencies, including the regional economic commissions of the United Nations and the regional services of the specialized agencies. This would result in a complete reconversion at the regional level of all the development activities of the United Nations system.

96. While the report did not conclude with formal recommendations it provided the United Nations system with a thought-provoking set of views and conclusions regarding its possible reform and represented a valuable contribution to the various endeavours underway, including decentralization to the regional level.

D. The "Group of 18"

97. The Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts established in 1985 by the General Assembly to review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations (the "Group of 18") formulated the following principles pertaining to the activities of the regional economic commissions:

(a) activities of the United Nations should be decentralized wherever appropriate (recommendation 5);

(b) offices responsible for the research, analysis and operational activities in economic and social matters should be more responsive to changing realities at the global and regional level (recommendation 39).[43]

98. With regard to the last point, the "Group of 18" made a specific observation to the extent that: "Some of the activities of the regional commissions are not fully suited to the current needs of Member States in the region concerned".[44] It also concluded: "Greater specialization is needed in areas of importance to Member States while keeping in mind the need to avoid duplication and overlapping within the United Nations system" (recommendation 27).[45]

99. As is well known, the work of the Group of High-Level Experts resulted in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213[46] which, in turn, has led to a variety of changes and reforms in the functioning of the United Nations. These were aimed at promoting the efficiency of administrative and financial aspects of the United Nations which had long been sought by Member States. But these reforms, by and large, have not affected the functioning of the United Nations in the economic and social areas.

E. The Special Commission of ECOSOC

100. Another attempt at restructuring, which has not resulted in change but which is nevertheless significant, was the work of the ECOSOC Special Commission on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields. The Special Commission had been created in response to recommendation 8 of the Group of 18 and expected to suggest measures for reforms. However, despite the nine sessions held between March 1987 and May 1988, the Special Commission was unable to reach any substantive conclusions and propose specific recommendations.

101. One main reason for the lack of progress was the fundamental divergence in viewpoints of different groups of Member States over the objectives and contents of the reform.[47] As the Stanley Foundation, which brings together for discussions well-known experts, high-ranking diplomats and senior United Nations officials, noted in one of its recent reports: "The possibilities for reform in the economic and social sector are limited by the lack of a clear political consensus on the UN role in this area. Other international organizations, like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and political groupings, such as the Group of Seven Industrialized Countries, take the lead in setting international economic policy. Proposals to reorganize the United Nations economic machinery prompt questions regarding the purpose of the reform."[48]

102. Another reason appeared to be the strong desire of some Member States to reduce the scope and the cost of United Nations activities, which was not shared by the majority of the Commission's members.

103. The Inspector, however, believes that the work of the Special Commission served a good purpose, as did the discussions that followed, first in ECOSOC and later in the General Assembly. The discussions contributed to a better understanding of the functioning of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields and served as a launching pad for many good ideas which were later translated into specific actions. They also led to some concrete improvements, particularly in the functioning of ECOSOC, culminating in resolution 45/264 as adopted by the resumed forty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

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104. By way of summing up the foregoing, it may be observed that the restructuring efforts of the past reached broadly similar conclusions about the types of changes that could lead to an improvement in the work of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. For the most part and with some exceptions, previous restructuring and reform recommendations have not been fully implemented and have thus had a limited impact. A number of reasons may be put forward in this respect. First, the failure of Member States to agree on overall goals and objectives for the United Nations made it very difficult to change the machinery charged with implementing these goals and objectives. Second, bureaucratic resistance has proved difficult to overcome. This observation is particularly true for decentralization to the field level. The third reason, in the Inspector's view, was the lack of leadership in the past restructuring exercises.

105. The latter also relates to the then inability of the Secretariat to initiate reform from inside and to stimulate governments. In this regard, in 1985, one former Executive Secretary of a regional commission admitted that even after ten years of service inside the Organization, he could not "understand why (we) leading officials presumably chosen for both political and professional acumen, are so much better in defending (our) their turf, in shuffling papers procedurally and in explaining away shortcomings, than in tackling substantive and fundamental issues - let alone in inspiring and leading." And immediately raised the question: "Is our loyalty to the Charter and the Organizations - or to ourselves? One test of our ability ... would be our willingness to face uncomfortable questions such as these and look for adequate responses". While acknowledging the undisputable fact that it was the Secretary-General who initiated the current restructuring process, the Inspector would like to observe that the turf battles to which the above cited official referred are not yet over.

III. CURRENT RESTRUCTURING EXERCISE AND THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

A. New approach

106. The Summit Meeting of the Security Council held on 31 January 1992 marked a turning point at the United Nations. The meeting, in particular, invited the Secretary-General to prepare an analysis and recommendations on strengthening and improving the efficiency of the Organization over the entire range of its activities. The Secretary-General was also given the mandate to undertake streamlining of the United Nations Secretariat.

107. In most recent restructuring efforts, attempts were made both by Member States and the Secretary-General to evaluate the functioning of the United Nations in the economic and social fields in a holistic manner and to formulate a comprehensive set of changes and reforms, proceeding from the overall objective of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. This objective is defined in General Assembly resolution 45/177 as "the need for more effective and efficient functioning of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations and its secretariat support structures in order to enhance international economic co-operation and to promote the development of the developing countries".[49]

108. With regard to attainment of the overall objective of restructuring of the economic and social sectors, the resumed forty-fifth session which approved resolution 45/264, was truly a milestone. The General Assembly accomplished a number of things: first, it affirmed the basic guiding principles of the reform process; second, it laid down the relevant schedule; and third, it reached a decision to reform the work of ECOSOC by: (a) consolidating the Council's regular sessions; (b) establishing a high-level segment to improve the Council's policy formulation function and co-ordination segment to enable the Council to address more effectively the issues of co-ordination within the United Nations system.

109. The basic principles and guidelines for restructuring established by resolution 45/264 provided, in particular, that:

- restructuring was primarily an intergovernmental responsibility and needed to be pursued in this context and that the Secretary-General as the Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations should assist and co-operate in this regard;

- the process of restructuring and revitalization should be guided by a clear mandate from the General Assembly;

- restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields should preserve the democratic principles which underpin the decision-making process of the United Nations;

- transparency and openness needed to be preserved and strengthened in the functioning of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields;

- restructuring and revitalization should be examined and pursued while ensuring the most efficient and effective use of the financial and human resources of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields.[50]

110. In this context, it will be recalled that during the discussion of resolution 45/264 two major additional points were made by Member States, namely:

- that restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations cannot be approached piece meal; and that

- the reform will be effective to the extent that it is not guided exclusively by simplistic cost/benefit criteria, but involves substantive changes by transforming the organs to which it is applied into effective instruments of economic and social development.

111. Resolution 45/264 also provided that a review of the Secretariat structure would be necessary on the basis of the agreements to be reached in the restructuring and revitalization process. In this context, the Secretary-General was requested "to review the structure of the Secretariat in the economic, social and related fields, taking into account the outcome of the resumed forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, future work, and other relevant resolutions, as appropriate, and to report thereon with such recommendations as might be appropriate to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session".[51] Having noted that management of the Secretariat was the responsibility of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly requested him to expeditiously "implement those measures within his purview, in accordance with the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the Assembly, to streamline Secretariat operations in the economic, social and related fields in order to reinforce the restructuring and revitalization process directed by the Assembly, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-sixth and forty-seventh sessions".[52] The Secretary-General was also requested to submit an annual progress report to the General Assembly, starting with its forty-seventh session, on the implementation of the result of the restructuring and revitalization process in the economic, social and related fields, in which he was requested to provide information on any recommendation agreed upon which had not been implemented as scheduled.

112. The basic principles and guidelines for restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations established by General Assembly resolution 45/264 were reaffirmed in resolution 46/235 of 13 April. In Annex II ("Principles for Restructuring and Revitalization") to resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly emphasized that "the current reform and all future efforts at reform should respect and build upon those resolutions and should be in conformity with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations ..."[53]

113. Within the framework of the general approach, described above, the General Assembly in its resolution 46/235 determined, inter alia, that the regional commissions should be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and that their effectiveness should be strengthened. It also stated that the regional commissions, "particularly those located in developing countries, should also be strengthened in terms of their activities and participation in operational activities of the United Nations system, bearing in mind the overall objectives of the restructuring and the revitalization process".[54]

114. In the same resolution, the regional commissions were requested to provide recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. These were presented by the Secretary-General in the context of his report on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.[55]

115. The 1992 ECOSOC substantive session is of particular importance since it adopted four resolutions pertaining to the commissions. In the resolution on strengthening the role of the regional commissions (resolution 1992/43), the *Council urged* them "to take steps to enable them fully to play their role in assisting their Member States, in particular developing countries, to promote sustainable development through an integrated approach".[56] *It recommended* all relevant bodies of the United Nations system dealing with development to co-ordinate their work with regional commissions when preparing technical co-operation programmes, with the view to achieving a better and more focused use of available resources, greater coherence of action and, therefore, greater and more concentrated impact. *The Council stressed* the regional commissions' role and important contribution in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in particular those contained in "Agenda 21". *It also stressed* the importance of regional commissions as being part of the continued reform process in the economic and social fields.

116. In resolution 1992/45 on a Europe-Africa link through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Council requested the Secretary-General, taking account of relevant priorities, to provide the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), within existing resources for 1992-1993, with the necessary funds.

117. In resolution 1992/51 on Strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa to face Africa's development challenges in the 1900s, the Council urged the Executive Secretary of the Commission to explore all possibilities to establish or strengthen the Commission's relationships with African intergovernmental organizations, specialized agencies of the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral development co-operation agencies and non-governmental organizations. In particular, the possibility of establishing joint units or special programmes with the specialized agencies and creation of a special unit within the secretariat of the Commission to co-ordinate its increased joint activities with non-governmental organizations.

118. As mentioned in paragraph 32 above, strengthened regional co-operation holds the key to the resolution of conflicts and to economic and social progress in many spheres. As a result, consensus is emerging to the effect that the potential of the regional commissions and their secretariats should be better exploited for the benefit of their constituents and the Organization as a whole. Given the present United Nations financial situation and the necessity to apply a holistic approach, the objective of strengthening the regional commissions may be attained through: (a) restructuring of the commissions themselves (their work programmes, conference structures, subsidiary machinery and secretariats); and (b) decentralizing United Nations economic and social activities to the regional level. Both processes are discussed below.

B. Restructuring by the regional commissions

119. The Inspector shares the view of the Secretary-General to the effect that, owing to their comparative advantages such as proximity to Member States, as well as their vital role in a number of sectoral activities and multidisciplinary perspectives, the regional commissions should be strengthened as a result of the current restructuring exercise. Strengthening of the regional commissions the Inspector understands not merely in terms of transfer of resources and delegation of commensurate authority which nevertheless are essential, but also in streamlining their operations, enhancing their accountability and improving performance. In this context, the Inspector would like to recall the Secretary-General's point made in his statement to the General Assembly of 2 November 1993 on the need for the commissions to operate within a coherent organizational strategy and for decentralization and greater authority to be accompanied by measures to enhance accountability.

120. The Inspector believes that strengthening should also be based upon the principle of complementarity among the commissions, Headquarters and global programmes, relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, taking into consideration each entity's comparative advantage. Accordingly, as already mentioned in this report (see para. 53 above), the regional commissions should concentrate their resources increasingly on priority areas where they could make a unique and significant contribution and either readjust or abandon activities which do not fall into this category. The commissions should strive to become centres of excellence for specific activities in their respective regions.

(a) ECA

121. In the year preceding the twenty-eighth session of ECA (24 April - 6 May 1993), a number of measures were taken to reinforce its internal capacity and strengthen its programme of assistance to Member States. The Commission's programme was re-organized around nine clusters which was intended both to strengthen synergy and to enable ECA to exercise maximum impact in support of development efforts of Member States. It has reformed its intergovernmental machinery accordingly. In particular, it: (a) abolished the Executive Committee and the Technical Committee of Experts; (b) established a Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole composed of high-level officials to deal with various matters submitted for consideration by the annual

meetings of the Conference of Ministers; and (c) merged the Conference of African Planners, Conference of African Statisticians and Conference of African Demographers into the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers. This reorganization would: (a) rationalize scheduling and preparation of conferences and meetings; (b) help to avoid duplication and overlap; (c) reduce periodicity of meetings; (d) save costs; and (e) ensure higher representation.

122. It may also be mentioned that the secretariat's restructuring is underway. It is aimed mainly at rationalizing divisions, sections and units to enhance synergy among related programmes and reinforce the multi-disciplinary approach to problem solving.

(b) ECE

123. In 1990, in response to radical changes in the region and the need to redefine its role in the new Europe, the Commission undertook a further in-depth review of its programme, structure and methods of work. The results of this review were embodied in two landmark decisions adopted by the Commission, namely decisions 0 (45) and P (45).

124. Thus, decision 0 (45) gave the ECE a new orientation which clearly reflected the changing interests and priorities of its member countries in the context of the new economic and political realities in the region and ECE comparative advantages. By this decision, ECE established five priority areas of activity, i.e.: environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation, and economic analysis. In these areas, special attention is attached to:

- ECE as a forum for the elaboration of the regional legal instruments in the field of environment, and for relevant follow-up action;

- the role of the Inland Transport Committee in the harmonization of standards and regulations on the construction of vehicles, the transport of dangerous goods, road traffic safety and customs requirements, and in the development of coherent transport infrastructures;

- the central role of the Conference of European Statisticians;

- the development of Electronic Data Interchange as a means of trade facilitation;

- economic analysis as an instrument for strengthening economic relations and multilateral co-operation among its member countries and with other regions of the world.

In the same decision, ECE agreed on broad outlines of work in sectors not identified as priorities in order to promote the process of economic reform and integrating the economies in transition with the global economy.

125. The importance of decision 0 (45) is not only that it identified the priority areas of the Commission, but, in doing so, it provided the Commission with the means to allocate its available resources to areas where its reputation is internationally recognized and where it can contribute most effectively to the process of transition in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Decision 0 (45) also reaffirmed the Commission's adoption of sustainable development as a guiding principle for all its relevant activities; introduced further refinements to its programme of work, intergovernmental machinery and calendar of meetings, with a greater use of informal meetings; stressed the need for enhanced co-operation and co-ordination of work with other United Nations programmes, agencies of the United Nations system and non-United Nations institutions active in the region (European Union, OECD, EBRD, Council of Europe, EFTA), in order to avoid duplication of work and to ensure optimum use of resources.

126. By decision P (45), the Commission reduced its annual session to seven working days and introduced quarterly ad hoc meetings to ensure a continuous review of ECE work in the light of

rapidly changing circumstances in the region. These meetings were entrusted with the following tasks: (a) consult on policy matters concerning the activities of the Commission; (b) assist in the preparation of the annual sessions of the Commission; (c) monitor progress in the Commissions' work programmes, ensure the proper and expeditious implementation of the Commission's decisions, in particular decisions 0 (45) and P (45); and (d) offer all necessary guidance to the Executive Secretary on the work of the Commission, including matters concerning the most efficient use of available staff and financial resources and the prevention of unnecessary duplication.

127. Within the reform framework, the Commission decided to follow the new Economic and Social Council format and divided its annual session into two segments, one for policy and the other on programme co-ordination.

(c) ECLAC

128. In response to General Assembly resolutions 40/237 and 41/213 on the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, ECLAC, by virtue of its resolution 489 (PLEN.19), streamlined its own intergovernmental structure by abolishing the sessional committees on water resources and human settlements. The ECLAC member governments also recognized that holding biennial sessions, instead of annual sessions customary in the other regional commissions - followed by meetings of its Committee of the Whole in between - ensured an efficient and practical functioning of the Commission.

129. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 45/177 and 45/264, ECLAC, at its twenty-fourth session (Santiago, 8-15 April 1992), approved resolution 520 (XXIV) entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields: Role and functions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean", whereby its member governments expressed their conviction "that the simplicity of the intergovernmental structure of the ECLAC system (which includes ILPES and CELADE) and the procedure of holding meetings of the Commission in biennial sessions have proved to be effective in meeting the objectives of the Commission".

130. The ECLAC secretariat has also undergone substantial restructuring. Twelve former organizational units - either divisions, units, centres, or projects - were consolidated into five divisions (Production, Productivity and Management; International Trade, Transport and Financing; Programme Planning and Operations; Statistics and Economic Projections; Environment and Human Settlements). Further internal restructuring to be undertaken in the very near future will include: (a) merging of the Division of Natural Resources and Energy with the Division of Environment and Human Settlements; (b) relocation of the Women in Development Unit to a better institutional position; and (c) strengthening of other divisions to comply with high priority mandates by Member States.

131. Summing up the restructuring measures undertaken by ECLAC over the last several years, it may be observed that:

(a) streamlining ECLAC's intergovernmental structure permits member governments to determine more easily the work programme of the Secretariat and control its performance;

(b) reorganization of the secretariat facilitated monitoring and supervision of the work carried out by its different organizational units, as well as the establishment of multi-disciplinary research teams.

(d) ESCAP

132. In 1992, after three years of deliberation on how to rationalize its activities, ESCAP decided (resolution 48/2) to adopt a thematic programme orientation and reduced the number of sub-

programmes from 15 to 6. Accordingly, at its forty-eighth session, ESCAP revised its subsidiary (conference) structure which at present comprises: (a) three thematic committees (regional economic co-operation, environment and sustainable development, poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development); (b) two other committees (statistics, transport and communication); and (c) two special bodies (least developed and land-locked developing countries and Pacific island developing countries). The thematic orientation of the programme took effect formally on 1 January 1994

133. Following the reform of the Commission's subsidiary structure, ESCAP's Secretariat has embarked on a comprehensive restructuring of its work programme from a sectoral to thematic multidisciplinary approach. By way of example, ESCAP's programme on poverty alleviation, which started with the 1994-1995 biennium, applies a holistic approach in dealing with issues in the following major areas: (a) growth strategies and structural reforms; (b) human resources development; (c) women in development; (d) social development, social services and social security; (e) population issues, including rural-urban migration; (f) agricultural and rural development; and (g) human settlement and urbanization.

134. Resolution 48/2 also invited the Executive Secretary to reorganize the secretariat so as to enhance its capability to service the thematic intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission and implement its revised programme of work. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary proposed the new organizational structure of the ESCAP secretariat which became operational provisionally, pending the Secretary-General's approval, as of 17 January 1994. At its fiftieth session (April 1994), the Commission expressed appreciation of the establishment of the inter-divisional working groups, which it considered a useful and innovative vehicle for implementing thematic programmes and ensuring a more effective functional relationship between the divisions concerned. In this connection, the Commission emphasized the importance of carrying out action-oriented, concrete thematic projects.[57]

(e) ESCWA

135. In ESCWA, a restructuring of sub-programmes along thematic lines was proposed to the session of the Commission held on 29-31 May 1994. This restructuring would result in concentration of the current 15 sub-programmes into 5 new sub-programmes: (a) management of natural resources and environment; (b) improvement of the quality of life; (c) economic development and co-operation; (d) regional development and global changes; and (e) special issues. Restructuring would stress the multidisciplinary approach of the Commission and the links between disciplines. Streamlining of ESCWA's intergovernmental structure and reorganization of its Secretariat accordingly is also on the agenda of the Commission. With regard to the ESCWA secretariat, the emphasis will be placed on the formation of task forces and multidisciplinary teams led in each case by the major contributing organizational unit.

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136. By way of conclusion, it may be observed that the regional commissions, confronted with rapid changes in the political, economic and social environment in their respective regions, clearly demonstrated their capacity to adjust, in a remarkably short span of time, to a radically new situation and the challenges resulting therefrom. In fact, reform of intergovernmental machinery and secretariats had been undertaken by some regional commissions before the agencies, organizations and other bodies of the United Nations system were invited by the General Assembly to "implement the measures for restructuring within their respective areas of competence, as appropriate".[58]

137. By reconsidering their priorities, the regional commissions made serious efforts to secure for themselves a significant and useful role in changing co-operation patterns within their respective regions. This is particularly true as far as ECE is concerned. The decisions, referred to above indicate that, rather than being a focal point of inter-systems co-operation of the past, ECE has tended to develop into a centre of excellence in specific areas of work which its constituents unanimously agreed to allocate to it.

C. Restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat

(a) first phase

138. Obviously, any restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery dealing with economic and social issues should be reflected in the reorganization (size, composition) of the services provided by the Secretariat. Intergovernmental reform and the Secretariat reform are two sides of the coin. Logically, changes in the Secretariat should have followed changes in the intergovernmental machinery. However, during the first phase of the current reform of the United Nations, the restructuring began with the Secretariat. Some analysts wondered whether, in this case, the cart had not been put before the horse. In the Inspector's view, the approach which has been taken is perfectly justified for two simple reasons. Firstly, over the years, the complexity of the Secretariat's multitude of units had inhibited the role that the Organization should play in the economic and social fields. The necessity to streamline the relevant units of the Secretariat had been expressed repeatedly by Member States in such fora as the General Assembly, ECOSOC, ACC, UNDP Executive Board, etc. The exercise undertaken by the Secretary-General clearly demonstrated his principal objective - to maximize the impact of the work of the United Nations in the field of economic and social development. Secondly, in the absence of long overdue decisions on the reform of the intergovernmental machinery, the Secretary-General had no other option but to use the mandate given to him by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council.

139. As a first stage of this exercise, the Secretary-General has done away with the cumbersome hierarchy under which 30 to 40 top officials reported directly to him.[59] Apart from cutting 14 top-level posts and reorganizing the political sector of the Secretariat, the Secretary-General has undertaken a major reform which included the consolidation of five former independent entities functioning in the economic and social sectors into one new Department for Economic and Social Development (DESD). The new Department consolidated the mandates and functions of the former Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic and Social Affairs; the Centre for Science and Technology for Development; the Centre on Transnational Corporations; and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development.[60] The intention of this merger was "to create new synergies among the three pillars of Headquarters work: system-wide co-ordination and policy guidance, research, analysis and studies on important global economic and social issues, and technical co-operation activities in developing countries, thus preparing the ground for the second phase encompassing all of the economic and social sectors of the Organization".[61] These measures were approved by the General Assembly[62] and were considered both in and outside the Organization as a "bold beginning".

(b) second phase and its difficulties

140. At the end of 1992, the Secretary-General launched a second phase of restructuring, which was eventually acted on by the General Assembly in May 1993. Although aimed at the same broad objectives - the elimination of duplication and the achievement of greater coherence and impact - the two phases differed significantly in relation to both scope and methodology.

141. The first phase focused exclusively on Headquarters departments, and involved, as far as the economic and social sectors are concerned, the initial consolidation of all economic and social offices and departments in New York into a single entity. While resulting in significant changes at Headquarters, the first phase did not affect the status quo in terms of distribution of functions between Headquarters and other parts of the Organization.

142. The second phase, on the other hand, had, as its frame of reference, the whole of the economic and social sectors of the Organization. Its starting point was an Organization-wide review of functions best carried out at Headquarters and of those which could be more effectively pursued by other entities within the Organization. Its results - based on the recommendations of a panel of independent high-level advisors - were a significant redeployment of functions and resources between Headquarters and the other offices and global Programmes of the Organization.

143. Approaches to the second phase of restructuring were presented in outline by the Secretary-General in his statement to the General Assembly of 2 November 1992. The statement introduced a new definition of the responsibilities to be carried out from Headquarters in the economic an social field around three clusters of functions - policy co-ordination, economic and social information of functions - policy analysis, and development support - which subsequently provided the basis of new Headquarters structures, centred around three departments: the Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA) and the Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS).

144. The objective of achieving a more "integrated approach" to development was pursued by consolidating in a single department at Headquarters (DPCSD) the functions of substantive support for both the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Sustainable Development (in relation to which a separate organizational entity had originally been envisaged at UNCED), as well as co-ordination functions in support of the World Food Council (which had, until then been carried out by a separate secretariat in Rome). The Social Development Division and the Branch for the Advancement of Women, located in Vienna, were likewise integrated in that department, thereby advancing the concept of a unified approach to social and economic development.

145. Other major relocations of activities concerned the transfer to UNCTAD of activities - until then undertaken at Headquarters -in the fields of technology and transnational corporations, thereby eliminating duplications and promoting an integrated approach to issues relating to trade, finance, investment, technology and development.

146. Equally relevant in this context, was the Secretary-General's stated intention to assign responsibility for the preparation of forthcoming conferences to the established departments, so as to avoid the proliferation of ad-hoc units which have, in the past, tended, following global conferences, to become permanent features of the structure of the Organization.

147. There is no doubt that the first phase of restructuring greatly facilitated the redeployment and other reforms undertaken during the second phase. While the number of Headquarters departments, as such, increased from the first phase to the second, the significant cut in the overall number high-level posts accomplished during the first phase was maintained. More importantly, the second phase brought about a significant consolidation of separate secretariat units in the economic and social area, and a considerable streamlining and rationalization of the overall structure of the Organization in that area. In stressing the personal attention he intended to give to the oversight and co-ordination of United Nations activities in the economic and social sectors, the Secretary-General noted that "clear lines of responsibility in a simpler structure, together with steps to eliminate duplication and over-lapping, can go a long way to solve the problem of co-ordination".

148. The Secretary-General made it clear, from the inception of the process, that he considered "striking the right balance between Headquarters and other centres on the one hand, and regional structures on the other" as a "key issue", and that, in his view, "the balance (had) shifted too much to the centre". It was therefore regrettable in terms of the opportunity for progress in relation to decentralization, through understandable because of the magnitude of the reorganization introduced in this phase, that specific measures affecting the regional commissions did not form an integral part of the package of proposals submitted to the General Assembly. Unfortunately, the follow-up process initiated in this respect has not yet brought about the desired results.

149. The reactions to the second phase of restructuring were vastly different from those in respect of the first phase. In the view of some of those who criticized this decision, the contents of the Secretary-General's note entitled "Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (A/47/753)" differed in some significant respects from the thrust of his earlier documents such as "Agenda for Peace (A/47/277)", "Report on the Work of

the Organization (A/47/1)", "Enhancing International Co-operation for Development: "The Role of the United Nations System (E/1992/82 and Add.1)" and his previous statements, in particular the one delivered on 2 November 1992 to the Second Committee.[63]

150. They also argued that with the creation of three new departments at Headquarters, the total number of distinct entities dealing with economic, social and environmental issues increased to 18, running counter to the Secretary-General's strong case on an integrated approach to development. In their view, the implications of this measure might be: (a) increased competition for limited United Nations budgetary resources; and (b) duplication of work and additional difficulty in co-ordinating these numerous entities in the absence of the dissolved office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation (DIEC).

151. During consideration of the relevant section of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 by the thirty-third session of CPC, it was observed with respect to DESIPA that "the proposed programme of work duplicated some of the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions".[64] It was also indicated that "the proposed programme of work of the Department contained some activities which had not been programmed in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 and did not currently have legislative mandates".[65] With respect to DDSMS, some CPC delegations observed that its proposed work programme also contained a "number of duplications of the activities undertaken in other departments and offices in the economic and social sectors".[66] Other delegations stressed the importance of co-ordinating activities among DDSMS, DESIPA, DPCSD, UNCTAD and UNDP and other agencies of the United Nations system.

152. At the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the main arguments of Member States who, while understanding difficulties to "wrap up all the various strands to enhance efficiency and cost-effectiveness in one bundle and at one time", criticized this decision may be summarized as follows:

- lack of coherence in the restructuring exercise and absence of master plan;

- lack of dialogue with Member States, while such important issues as the reform and restructuring of the United Nations should be handled collectively on the basis of democratic consultations with Member States;

- changes in programmes and shift in priorities as well as creating new posts is not the Secretariat's but rather Member States' prerogative and, therefore, seeking approval from Member States on an ex post facto basis is inappropriate.

Similar arguments were advanced by Member States during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.[67]

153. In connection with the consideration of revised budget estimates arising from restructuring, the General Assembly in its resolution 47/212,[68] in particular:

- **emphasized** that the restructuring of the Secretariat should be carried out in accordance with the guidance given by the General Assembly;

- **noted** the Secretary-General's indication that the further restructuring of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors would entail the decentralization to the field and to the regional commissions and *stressed* that his proposals relating to decentralization should be in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/199 and those proposals relating to the decentralization to the regional commissions in accordance with the criteria approved by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council;

- **requested** the Secretary-General to ensure that any future proposals relating to major changes in the organization of the Secretariat include a timetable for their

implementation and, to the extent possible, are submitted in the context of the biennial proposed programme budgets.

154. With regard to the request addressed to the Secretary-General in the same resolution "to review, in the context of the current overall restructuring process, the role of the United Nations Headquarters, centres, the regional commissions and entities in the field ..., with a view to improving the distribution of responsibilities" among these, on the basis of their relative advantages, and the Secretary-General's intention to establish mechanisms for effective co-ordination of the activities of the departments and units responsible for economic and social issues, the Inspector observes that, in early 1994, some significant steps were taken. These include the Secretary-General's decisions to:

(a) establish an inter-departmental Advisory Panel on Management and Finance, comprising the heads of all Headquarters Departments, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. The Panel's mandate covers a wide range of programme planning, budgeting and management issues, including all relevant aspects of restructuring. The Panel has been holding monthly meetings and is attended, as required, by the Secretary-General;

(b) resume the practice of Meetings of United Nations Senior Officials in the economic and social fields under his chairmanship. Decentralization is expected to be a main focus of discussion at these meetings; and

(c) designate a Senior Adviser in the Secretary-General's Office as the focal point of contacts and co-ordination between Headquarters and the regional commissions.

In addition, it may be noted that in order to facilitate the discussion of overall approaches, contribute to common understandings, and ensure complementarity and synergy of operations, a United Nations Technical Co-operation Programme in Natural Resources and Energy has been created. It consists of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions and the Under-Secretary-General of DDSMS, who is also the chairman of the group.

(c) strengthening the regional commissions: practical actions

155. In this report, a number of references have been made to the emphasis given by the present Secretary-General to decentralization, as a means of bringing the United Nations closer to the Member States that it serves, thereby increasing its impact and effectiveness and improving the efficiency of delivery. In his report on regional co-operation, submitted to the ESOCOC[69] substantive session of 1993, the Secretary-General recalled that the importance of decentralization to the regional level stems from the role and functions assigned to the regional commissions in several resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Among the broad responsibilities assigned to the regional commissions in those resolutions are the following: (a) functioning as the main centres within the United Nations system for general economic and social development within their respective regions; (b) exercising team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level; (c) providing inputs for global policy-making processes of competent United Nations organs and participating fully in the implementation of relevant policy and programme decisions taken by those organs; (d) participating actively in operational activities, particularly in sub-regional, regional and inter-regional projects of an inter-sectoral nature; and (e) assistance in strengthening regional co-operation and helping to promote effective inter-regional co-operation.

156. In this connection, it needs to be mentioned that at the 1992 and 1993 sessions of ECOSOC, Member States supported the view of the Secretary-General that the Organization should make better use of the capabilities of the regional commissions in the overall context of United Nations reform.

157. Within the framework of preparing for further decentralization to the regional level and transforming the commissions into "the regional arms of a single, integrated United Nations programme", the Secretary-General addressed a letter on 1 April 1993 to the executive secretaries of the regional commissions together with a note on decentralization to the regional level.

158. The letter invited the executive secretaries to provide their views on what activities could be carried out more effectively at the regional level. The Secretary-General's concept of decentralization to the regional level may be summarized as follows:

(a) decentralization is best regarded as a functional process involving a more effective distribution of responsibilities and tasks between global and regional entities that takes full account of the distinct mandates and special characteristics of the regional commissions within the overall structure of the United Nations;

(b) it should not entail a fragmentation of the activities of the Secretariat; rather it should promote complementarity and mutual reinforcement of activities and should contribute to the cohesiveness of the work of the United Nations, the various parts of which constitute an integral whole;

(c) the regional commissions should be viewed as the regional arms of a single integrated United Nations programme in the socio-economic field, rather than disparate, separate entities; and their participation in and contribution to the global work of Headquarters entities should be enhanced and the mechanisms for programmatic interaction strengthened.[70]

159. To put this concept into practice, the Secretary-General decided to establish a Task Force at the Secretariat level, with participation of the regional commissions, to review substantive Headquarters activities that could be carried out more effectively at the regional level. In order to facilitate the work of the Task Force the following guiding principles were established:

(a) **Effectiveness and efficiency**. Responsibility for a given programme should, as far as possible, be assigned to the entity that, because of the characteristics of its mandate and activities, is most capable of responding in a cost-effective way to the specific needs that the programme is intended to meet, taking into account the nature and location of the intended beneficiaries.

(b) **Depth of information**. Responsibility for a given programme should, as far as possible, be assigned to the entity (regional, sectoral or global) within the Organization in which there is the greatest concentration of information relevant to that programme.

(c) **Multisectoral requirements of activities**. Based on a careful analysis of the many disciplines and sectors impinging on the increasingly complex and diverse development problems addressed by United Nations programmes, responsibilities for a given programme should whenever possible be assigned to the organizational entity that, because of the nature of its overall work programme, is best equipped to bring to bear on that programme the multisectoral dimensions required.

160. Following these principles, the Office of the Secretary-General identified advisory services and natural resources as the first two areas to be decentralized to the regional level.

(i) advisory services

161. As far as advisory services are concerned, these, under the regular programme of technical co-operation (Section 20 of the budget), comprise:

(a) sectoral advisory services, executed, as appropriate, by DDSMS, DESIPA, DHA, UNCTAD, UNCHS, CHR, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch at Vienna;

(b) regional and sub-regional advisory services, executed by the secretariats of ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA.

Under the previous regular budgets, the distribution between the two types of advisory services had been as follows: sectoral advisory services - about 60 per cent, and regional and sub-regional services - about 40 per cent.

Table 4: Redeployment of resources under Regular Programme of Technical Co-operation (millions of United States dollars)

	ECA		ECE		ECLAC		ESCAP		ESCWA		TOTAL	
	1992 1993	1994 1995	1992 1993	1994 1995	1992 1993	1994 1995	1992 1993	1994 1995	1992 1993	1994 1995	1992 1993	1994 1995
1. Development issues and policies	2.5	2.2	-	-	1.8	2.8	0.9	1.3	0.6	0.5	5.8	6.8
2. Food and agriculture	0.3	0.4	-	0.3	0.2	-	-	-	0.4	0.5	0.9	1.2
3. Environment	0.3	0.7	-	0.3	-	-	-	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.9
4. Human Settlements	-	-	-	0.3	-	-	-	0.3	-	-	-	0.6
5. Energy	0.3	0.7	-	0.4	-	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.4	1.0	2.6
6. Industrial development	0.4	0.8	-	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	1.3	2.3
7. International trade	-	0.4	-	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.5	1.0	-	-	1.3	3.0
8. Public administration	0.7	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.7	0.7
9. Natural resources	-	0.4	-	-	-	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.8	0.7	2.3
10. Social development	-	0.4	-	-	-	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.9	1.8
11. Statistics	0.3	0.7	-	0.4	-	-	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.9	1.3	2.1
12. Transport and communications	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.2	-	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	1.5	2.2
13. Science and technology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4
TOTAL*	5.1	8.1	0.4	3.4	3.2	5.4	3.4	5.8	4.3	5.2	16.4	28.0

Note: Total figures may not add due to rounding.

162. Upon the recommendation of the inter-departmental task force and the Secretary-General proposed to assign US$ 28.0 million to the regional commissions within the framework of the 1994-1995 programme budget, (as against US$ 16.7 million in 1992-1993) out of the total of US$ 45.4 million. As a result, the share of the regional commissions will increase to 61.7 per cent, representing a major reorientation in the utilization of the resources provided in the regular budget for technical assistance, as well as the most significant redeployment of resources to the regional commissions since the 1978 restructuring exercise.

163. Table 4 on page 31 shows that ECA and ECE will have the largest share of the increase - about US$ 3.0 million each, followed by ESCAP - US$ 2.4 million, ECLAC - US$ 2.2 million and ESCWA - US$ 0.9 million. All the commissions, apart from ESCWA, will have resources under Section 20 for activities related to international trade. ECLAC will have a tangible increment in resources to carry out a systematic analysis of development strategies, the formulation of economic policies aimed at achieving changes in production patterns in the context of social equity and the design of fiscal policies in the context of economic stabilization.

(ii) natural resources and energy

164. With regard to activities related to natural resources and energy, it is worth mentioning that, under the 1992-1993 proposed programme budget, some US$ 2.4 million dollars were allocated to the former DIESA and US$ 5.3 million dollars to DTCD (natural resources - US$ 3.2 million dollars and energy - US$ 2.1 million dollars). Within the framework of these activities, DIESA was mostly concerned with: (a) monitoring and analysis of global energy trends and prospects and their impact on development (23.0 per cent); (b) promotion of energy exploration and development in developing countries (13.0 per cent); (c) furthering the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy (41.0 per cent); and (d) co-ordination in the field of water resources (23.0 per cent). In the areas of natural resources, DTCD resources were distributed as follows: (a) water resources development and management (33.0 per cent); (b) mineral resources (34.0 per cent); and (c) surveying, mapping and international co-operation in cartography.

165. In terms of human resources, DIESA, before it was incorporated into DESD, had 10 Professional and 5 General Service posts to carry them out, and DTCD 21 post and 13 posts respectively.[71]

166. Actually, activities in the areas of energy and natural resources already constitute an intrinsic part of the commissions' programmes of work. Thus, ECE has taken specific action in the area of the prevention of pollution of transboundary waters and their rational use. Policy documents and law instruments have been elaborated, such as: Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes: Principles regarding co-operation in the field of transboundary waters (1987); Charter on Groundwater Management (1989), etc. As far as the energy sector is concerned, at least 50 per cent of United Nations work on non-renewable resources is carried out in the ECE.

167. ESCAP's contribution to natural resources includes supplying consultants, advising governments and organizing meetings on aspects of the legalities and economics of mining development. ESCAP needed additional resources for the development of mineral policy and sectoral strategy in the mining field; investment-related legal regimes and mining agreement models; drafting of mining laws; their accompanying regulations and administration; the establishment and training of appropriate bureaucracies to carry out policy goals, and on mining negotiations.

168. The thrust of ECA's support to African countries in the field of natural resources and energy is improving their management and the application of technologies including cartography and remote sensing. This is pursued through the provision of advisory services to governments, national, sub-regional and regional institutions and NGOs upon their request; by providing substantive support to technical co-operation activities; by preparing technical reports, studies, publications and other materials for use by governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other institutions involved in development, and the organization of seminars, workshops, training meetings.

169. In Western Asia, ESCWA is the only body with a comprehensive programme covering the various aspects of development and use in the water, natural resources and energy fields, including the greatest concentration of information obtained first hand and on a regular and continuous basis in a cost-effective way.

170. The above shows that there has been considerable duplication of activities among United Nations global and regional entities which had to be rationalized through improvements in the distribution of functions and resources. This, in turn, required an inter-Secretariat review which would involve Headquarters departments, as well as UNCTAD, UNEP and the regional commissions. In his statement of 8 December 1993, the Controller informed the Fifth Committee that it had turned out to be impossible to complete this review before the end of 1993, and that the Secretariat "was not in a position to submit a report to the General Assembly at its current session". However, he indicated that the comprehensive inter-Secretariat review would be expedited and a report will be made on its outcome together with detailed programmatic justification. The redistribution of functions and resources between United Nations global and regional bodies had also been the subject of consultations between the Secretariat entities concerned.

171. As a result of these consultations, the Secretary-General in his recent report on decentralization of activities in the fields of natural resources and energy[72] proposed redistributing the relevant responsibilities and resources between DDSMS and the regional commissions. As far as the resources are concerned, the proposed distribution is given below.

Table 5: Redeployment of resources frozen in DDSMS in the area of energy and natural resources

	Currently in DDSMS	Proposed distribution					
		ECA	ECE	ECLAC	ESCAP	ESCWA	DDSMS
Professional posts	15	2	1	2	2	2	6
General Service posts	23	2	1	2	2	2	14
Consultants (thousands of US$)	112.0	12.5	5.0	12.5	12.5	12.5	57.0
Expert groups (thousands of US$)	52.3	-	-	-	-	-	52.3
Travel (thousands of US$)	120.7	15.0	7.5	15.0	15.0	15.0	53.2

Source: A/C.5/48/76

172. As follows from the table above, the regional commissions will be allocated 6 professional posts out of 15 and 14 General Service posts out of the total of 23 currently frozen in DDSMS. ECA will get 4 posts (1 D-1, 1 P-4 and 2 GS posts). ESCAP - 4 posts (1 P-5, 1 P-4 and 2 GS posts), ECLAC - 4 posts (1 P-4, 1 P-3 and 2 GS posts, ESCWA - 4 posts (1 P-4, 1 P-3 and 2 GS posts), ECE - 2 posts (1 P-5 and 1 GS posts).

173. In terms of financial resources, the regional commission would be allocated US$ 2.6 million out of the total of US$ 5.9 million or about 44 per cent. In staff costs (established posts), the regional commissions would be allocated almost US$ 2.5 million dollars out of the total of US$ 5.6 million. The proposed distribution of resources earmarked for consultants, expert groups and travel are reflected in the table.

174. The proposals made by the Secretary-General for decentralization activities and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy differ from those submitted by the regional commissions, which suggested allocating to them all the human resources indicated in paragraph 158 above. In fact, some of these resources had been redeployed to other departments in the course of current restructuring and, thus, only those frozen in DDSMS were used as a basis for redeployment. In redistributing these frozen resources, the Secretary-General proceeded from the assumption that decentralization should not mean fragmentation and loss of critical mass. In his

view, there should be linkage and co-ordination of the work of the regional commissions and central programmes, and that the experience and unique position of Headquarters should be judiciously used.

175. According to the Secretary-General, decentralization of activities in the areas of energy and natural resources should lead to a single integrated technical co-operation programme, with projects executed by both DDSMS and the regional commissions. He proposes that this programme be administered by a management board composed of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions and chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for DDSMS, who will be responsible for overall co-ordination and oversight. Global responsibilities for water and minerals have been entrusted to UNEP and UNCTAD, respectively.

(iii) towards further decentralization

176. Despite their limited scope, the above measures and initiatives by the Secretary-General aimed at strengthening the regional commissions, represent, in the view of the Inspector, a commendable decentralization effort. The Inspector, however, believes that this is only a beginning, "a set of initial measures that would need to be refined, complemented in the period ahead".[73]

177. Indeed, the complexities of global management are such that global institutions by themselves cannot address all problems, or even most of them, and it is absolutely vital that there is considerable devolution of tasks and functions to the regions where some of them can be discharged more effectively.[74] Moreover, as too many issues facing the international community warrant regional solutions, it would be unproductive, if not counter-productive, to try to tackle them at the global level.

178. In order to pursue the decentralization exercise, a need exists for further convincing analysis as to what activities in other areas - infrastructure development, transport, industry, environmental protection, eradication of poverty, integration, to name a few - can be made more effective if carried out at the regional level. Once these activities are identified, there will be no need for the headquarters to deal with the issues which are best handled at the regional level, beyond periodical reviews and consultations through an established mechanism to determine at what level the particular issues should be addressed. This will constitute an important reversal of the standard practice of global bodies which assume a central role in virtually all issues on the international agenda and only leave to the regional commissions what is left over, thus, using the so-called residual principle. In this context, it is useful to recall that the regional commissions' work programmes are adopted by their legislative bodies.

179. A corollary to this practice is the regular imposition of issues by central bodies on the regional commissions in the belief that the *raison d'être* of the latter is largely to contribute to global programmes. This is not to say that regional programmes cannot or should not make a valuable contribution to global programmes but rather that the form and content of global programmes should be governed in many cases by what has been developed in the various regional activities and where a clear case had been made for global action. If applied, this approach would give the regional commissions an opportunity to increase their contribution to global activities, while at the same time having their distinctive role and responsibilities.

180. All too often, the global programme is a central initiative which requires the regional commissions to package their activities in a special way to make them acceptable to the global programme. By taking up certain issues at the global level they are often politicised in a way which makes a balanced substantive discussion later less likely. Here again, the above-mentioned established mechanism of reviews and consultations will prove useful as it will allow a permanent and substantive dialogue to be maintained on programmatic issues between the global programmes and regional commissions.

181. Under the present circumstances, the regional commissions find it practically impossible to undertake any new or expanded activities if decentralization of activities is not accompanied by allocation of commensurate resources, immediately through redeployment in appropriate cases. For the future programme budget, the regional commissions should receive special consideration for allocation of additional resources which would be commensurate with additional responsibilities to be entrusted to them.

182. Finally, further delegations of authority in administrative and financial matters should be made with a view to enhancing the implementation capability of the regional commissions. This should include such matters as payrolls and accounting functions, appointments of certifying officers for accounts, recruitment, redeployment of posts and other sources laterally among programmes, management of non-staff components of the regular budgets, procurement and contractual arrangements. The questions of resources, flexibility in their management and recruitment of highly qualified staff are critical for the survival of the regional commission. While supporting this decentralization, the Inspector, however, would like to emphasize that it should be accompanied by a proper system of accountability and responsibility which the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/218, requested the Secretary-General to establish not later than 1 January 1995.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

183. There seems to be a consensus that the regional dimension of the United Nations and the role of the regional commissions, in particular, should be strengthened. The fundamental argument in favour of this is that although, for the most part, the economic and social problems of today's world are being faced by national governments, the keys to their solution are often to be found at the regional and global levels. A regional approach is preferred in most cases for the following reasons: first, strengthened regional co-operation is a key element in enhancing mutual confidence and achieving political, economic and social progress; second, a regional approach often allows more efficient use of the natural, human, financial and other resources available to the countries of respective regions compared to a national approach; third, the existence of a variety of regional and sub-regional mechanisms makes it possible to bring relevant problems to their attention as soon as they emerge; and fourth, in many cases, it is easier to get a quick response from a regional than from a global entity.

184. The enlargement of the European Union, signing of the NAFTA Agreement, reinvigoration of the Asian Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC), and commitment of African States to establish the African Economic Community provide the most recent examples of governments' increasing efforts to solve their problems through regional arrangements.

185. The preceding analysis suggests that the attempts made in the 1970s and 1980s to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities proved, on balance, to be unsuccessful. The ongoing reform of the Secretariat has the potential to enhance the role of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, particularly in the area of research and analysis of global development trends. However it falls short of achieving the objectives put forward by the Secretary-General, for example as far as the regional commissions are concerned. Despite recent measures aimed at decentralization of advisory services and activities in the area of energy and natural resources, the declared intention to strengthen and turn the commissions into "integrated United Nations regional centres" has yet to be translated into more significant practical actions.

186. The Inspector attributes the limited progress in the implementation of measures proposed by the Secretary-General and aimed at decentralization of economic and social activities to the regional level, to a number of reasons which prompt the corrective measures formulated hereunder. The first reason is certainly those enormous difficulties which are involved in the entire exercise of restructuring such a huge machinery as the United Nations Secretariat. Not all of them were foreseen when this exercise was started. The second reason is the unfinished process of restructuring and revitalization of the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors which has somewhat hampered the Secretary-General's efforts to proceed with further restructuring. Thirdly, the Secretary-General had no clear-cut mandate or specific guidance for restructuring the economic and social part of the Secretariat such as he was given in the political sector. The fourth reason is the declining interest of Member States towards restructuring the economic and social sectors. The lack of an intergovernmental substantive dialogue on the reform process might result in decisions and initiatives which would portray the Organization as lacking in certainty.[75]

> **RECOMMENDATION 1.** Member States may wish to: (a) reaffirm their conviction of the urgent need to give a further impetus to the slowed down process of restructuring and revitalization of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations; and (b) give the Secretary-General more specific guidance for restructuring the economic and social parts of its Secretariat. They may also wish to take more co-ordinated positions in the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations on such issues as roles and programmes of the respective economic and social bodies as well as on restructuring and decentralization.

187. In the Inspector's view, the fifth reason is the fact that, prior to the current restructuring exercise, no serious substantive analysis had been made on the content of the future reform and, in particular, on the division of responsibilities and complementarity of functions of and future co-

operation and co-ordination mechanisms for the various entities of the United Nations both at and away from Headquarters, as well as on complementarity of activities carried out by the regional commissions and non-United Nations regional agencies and organizations. The Secretariat also failed to produce an extensive analysis of comparative advantages of these entities which could prove which of them would be more efficient in dealing with specific economic and social issues on the international agenda. Lack of these analyses explains the absence of a coherent plan of restructuring and decentralization as well as: (a) different perceptions both at Headquarters and in the field of what decentralization to the regional level really means; (b) different and sometimes conflicting perspectives as to which particular entities could discharge a specific sub-programme or activity more efficiently; (c) different criteria applied in justifying the extent of decentralization.

188. The United Nations too often places procedures before substance and long-range thinking is a rare commodity in the United Nations.[76] This deficiency and unavailability of forward-looking analytical and thought-provoking papers for discussions by Member States, which partially explain the above-mentioned insufficiency of intergovernmental dialogue, the Inspector attributes to the lack of strategic analysis and strategic planning facility which should be an integral part of an organization of the magnitude of the United Nations, which, moreover, has to adjust its activities regularly to the world's changing realities, obviously taking into account its mandate. There is obviously a need for a clear vision of the restructuring process.[77]

> **RECOMMENDATION 2.** Member States may wish to give careful consideration to establishing a strategic analysis and strategic planning facility in the United Nations Secretariat to supply the Secretary-General with the necessary substantive input into his strategic thinking and decision-making process. This facility should not replace the substantive technical thinking and planning that other departments are providing but concentrate on general strategic organizational and management aspects from the overall perspective of the United Nations.

189. The sixth reason, in the Inspector's opinion, is that lack of an accountable official responsible on a day-to-day basis for all aspects of restructuring of the economic and social sectors, including decentralization, has left a void in the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions and plans of the Secretary-General. The Inspector notes some organizational measures undertaken by the Secretary-General to deal with restructuring and decentralization (see para. 147 above). The Inspector also observes that the Secretary-General recently decided to request the UNDP Administrator to assist him in ensuring policy coherence and enhancing co-ordination in the development and international economic co-operation arenas.[78] However, the Inspector believes that neither can replace day-to-day oversight and management of the current restructuring process. In this regard, it needs to be emphasized that General Assembly resolution 48/218, adopted on 23 December 1993, endorsed the CPC recommendation on the establishment of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility not later than 1 January 1995.

> **RECOMMENDATION 3.** In accordance with the demand of the General Assembly to establish a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility in the United Nations Secretariat and in the light of failures over the last several years to make substantial progress in this important area, the Inspector believes it is critical to designate a competent senior official with extensive managerial experience, who will be a focal point and held accountable for the firm implementation of the current restructuring process.

190. The lack of in-depth analysis has also been evident following the first stage of restructuring. This hampered the ability of Member States to identify and analyze the programmatic aspects and consequences of restructuring the Secretariat. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly, in its two resolutions,[79] regretted that the report of the Secretary-General on the restructuring and efficiency of the Secretariat (A/48/428) did not provide an analysis of the effects of the restructuring on programmes as requested in its resolutions 46/232 and 47/212 A and B and did not include proposals on decentralization measures. CPC, at its thirty-third session, also regretted that the report was more descriptive than analytical, reflecting the current state of flux in the

Secretariat. It noted with concern that the issue of decentralization was not properly addressed and underlined the need for a prompt presentation of a report on the matter during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

> **RECOMMENDATION 4.** The Secretary-General is requested to prepare as soon as possible a specific report which, inter alia, should: (a) clearly describe functions and responsibilities of the various United Nations entities operating in the economic and social fields; (b) contain a substantive analysis as to their complementarity; (c) describe mechanisms for co-ordinating their activities; and (d) contain the Secretary-General's ideas concerning the restructuring measures he intends to propose in the short and medium terms.

191. With regard to the activities of the regional commissions, the Inspector believes that they should increasingly concentrate their resources on priority areas where they could make a unique and significant contribution and either readjust or abandon activities which do not fall into this category. The commissions should improve their performance and strive to become centres of excellence for specific activities in their respective regions.

> **RECOMMENDATION 5.** The activities of the commissions in regional co-operation should take into account the importance of the work of other United Nations regional agencies as well as that of global organizations, (e.g. multilateral financial institutions), bilateral donors, and of non-governmental organizations active in the same or adjacent areas. The regional commissions should make an inventory of these organizations together with an analysis of their areas of competence and programmes of work in order to: (a) determine the areas where the regional commissions can be most effective; (b) establish closer co-operation with them; and (c) ensure complementarity of action.

192. In paragraphs 36-44 above, the Inspector refers to the serious financial difficulties confronted by the regional commissions and their implications for both the implementation of the commissions' respective mandates and operational capacity. In this context, the relevant provisions (see paras. 47 and 49 above) of General Assembly resolution 46/235 and ECOSOC resolution 1993/43 should be recalled.

> **RECOMMENDATION 6.** Within the context of implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/235 and ECOSOC resolution 1992/43, the Secretary-General is requested to undertake discussions with the executive heads of the United Nations funding agencies on the most rational use and financing of the regional commissions' operational capacity. Greater involvement of the regional commissions as executing agencies of regional and sub-regional projects, and national projects with specific regional focus, financed by these agencies should be seriously considered.

193. Finally, the Inspector concludes (see paragraph 79 above) that the commissions' co-ordination function provided for in resolution 32/197 has not been put into practice. However, he observes that the Secretary-General has, at the level of ACC, made efforts aimed at enhancing the co-ordinating and team leadership role of the regional commissions (see para. 90 above). The Inspector believes that the co-operation pattern proposed by the Secretary-General may, in future, develop into a regular mechanism of co-operation between the United Nations system regional offices and the regional commissions into genuine "integrated United Nations regional centres", which will represent a major step in the implementation of resolution 32/197. The Inspector also believes that the proposed measures for strengthening inter-agency arrangements at the regional level has a potential for considerable cost savings.

> **RECOMMENDATION 7.** Member States, through their representatives in the legislative bodies of organizations of the United Nations system, may wish to accord the necessary support to the Secretary-General's initiatives aimed at strengthening the co-ordinating and team leadership role of the regional commissions.

Notes

Introduction

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Chapter I

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16. "Strengthening development information systems for regional co-operation and integration in Africa", resolution 766 (XXVIII), Ibid., para. 6, p.4.

17. "African Institute for Economic Development and Planning", resolution 768(XXVIII), Ibid,. paras. 1-2, p. 5.

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19. "Triennial policy review of operational activities for development within the United Nations system", General Assembly resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992, para. 3.

20. "Strengthening the role of the regional commissions", ECOSOC resolution 1992/43 of 31 July 1992.

21. "Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific". Annual report, 30 April 1993 - 13 April 1994, doc. E/1994/36, E/ESCAP/976, p. 81.

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50. "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", General Assembly resolution 45/264 of 13 May 1991, Annex, Part I, para. 3.

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55. "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields". Report of the Secretary-General (A/47/534 of19 October 1992).

56. "Strengthening the role of the regional commissions", ECOSOC resolution 1992/143 of 31 July 1992.

57. "Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific". Annual report 30 April 1993 - 13 April 1994, E/1994/36, E/ESCAP/976, p. 73.

58. "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993, para. 5.

59. It will be recalled that, in its report (see A/41/49), the "Group of 18" recommended a reduction of the overall staffing by 15 per cent over,three years (regular budget) and 25 per cent reduction of the number of posts at the levels of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant-Secretary-General (regular and extrabudgetary sources), also over three years.

60. For more detail see: "Review of the Efficiency of the Administration and Financial Functioning of the United Nations". Restructuring of the Secretariat of the Organization. Note by the Secretary-General (A/46/882), 22 February 1992).

61. "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", Restructuring and efficiency of the secretariat. Report of the Secretary-General (A/48/428) 29 September 1993, p. 11.

62. "Revitalization of the United Nations Secretariat". General Assembly resolution 46/232 of 2 March 1992.

63. In his statement of 2 November 1992, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of decentralization at both the national and regional levels, as a means of bringing the United Nations closer to the Member States it serves. He also indicated his intention to strengthen the role and contribution of the regional commissions, emphasizing at the same time the need for the commissions to operate within a coherent organizational strategy and for decentralization and greater delegation of authority to be accompanied by measures to enhance accountability.

64. A/46/16, op. cit., p. 29.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. See, in particular, A/C.5/48/SR.14, A/C.5/48/SR.18, A/C.5/48/SR.19, A/C.5/48/SR.22, A/C.5/48/SR.26.

68. "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations and programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993", General Assembly resolution 47/212 B of 20 May 1993.

69. "Regional Co-operation". Report of the Secretary-General E(/1993/85,) 24 June 1993, p. 59.

70. Ibid., p. 62.

71. "Proposed Programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993", (A/46/6/Rev.1), Volume 1, Section 13, p. 9 and Section 14 paras. 8-11.

72. "Programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. Revised estimates under Sections 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19". Decentralization of activities and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy. Report of the Secretary-General, (A/C.5/48/76) 31 May 1994).

73. E/1993/85, op. cit., p. 63.

74. Regional Economic Commissions: some new perspectives by Leelananda Da Silva. Paper prepared for CCPOQ. Geneva, January 1994, p. 1.

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75. A/C.5/48/SR.22, p. 13.

76. Reforming the United Nations for the 1990s. Report of the North-South Roundtable Session on the future of the UN. Uppsala, Sweden. September 6-8, 1989, p. 18.

77. A/C.5/48/SR.14, p. 4.

78. See SG/SM/5380, DEV/2026 of 27 July 1994.

79. "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations". General Assembly resolution 48/218 of 23 December 1993, p. 2, para. 3.

"Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995". General Assembly resolution 48/228 of 23 December 1993, p. 2, para. 11.